

Intimacy and morality in Hargeisa, Somaliland

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DECLARATION

I, Caroline Ackley confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I argue that the life course is an entanglement of moralities, time, and selves. Through analysis of women's intimate relationships, I suggest that life course transformation is a complex process where the self is simultaneously being formed and being dissolved. More specifically, I explore women's conscious deliberations into what it means to live an ethical life according to values that shift and evolve over time. Time in the life course may be experienced with a sense of forward motion, yet life is comprised of multiple, overlapping moments and is infinite in its nature. Women live the life of this world in order to enjoy the life of the other world; a life understood as one's destiny and one that is infinite with the potential to do more, be more, and have more than the present moment. Ultimately this is a thesis that describes the complex substances of daily life.

IMPACT STATEMENT

This thesis aims to make contributions to the discipline of anthropology, to area studies focusing on the Horn of Africa, and to public health policy and practice. It problematizes common representations and moral evaluations of Muslims, Somalis, and women by relying on Somali women's descriptions of their intimate relationships.

Within the discipline of anthropology this thesis contributes to an existing body of work in the anthropology of Islam, anthropology of the body, postcolonial theory, life course development, and an anthropology of ethics and morality. It does so by (1) exploring women's everyday intimate relationships to illuminate the complex nature of life and the life course, while providing a counter narrative to the 'flattening out' of Somali women; (2) reconfiguring life course models to include a theory of entanglement. This includes (a) building on Achille Mbembe's (1992, 2001) theory of entanglement by revealing a simultaneity of moralities, time, and selves, and recontextualizing entanglement in everyday experiences; (b) analysing how women negotiate sometimes competing moralities and values; and (c) extending temporality in the life course to include the life of the other world. Next, this thesis contributes to the discipline of anthropology by (3) proposing an introductory theory of destiny as a 'middle ground' by focusing on everyday experiences of belief in God's omnipotence and 'working' on destiny; and finally by (4) identifying the emergence of a 'new morality' being forged by young, urban women. This 'new morality' reflects their conceptions of what it means to be modern, and illuminates a counter-narrative to pervading discourse on Islam and women in Somalia/Somaliland.

This thesis contributes to a growing scholarship on gendered experiences in the Horn of Africa, namely Somaliland. It draws on observations of everyday life in the family, on the bus, at the market, during cooking, in worship, at rites of passage like marriages, and the everyday conversations I had with women. This focus illuminates the intimacies of women's daily lives and presents a counter-narrative to the 'flattening out' of the complexity of women's lives. It shows that the simplistic narrative often told about Somali women in the media and present in public discourse fails to reveal that women are many things, at many times; they are not just passive victims or agentive rebels.

Within public health policy and practice this thesis contributes to approaches of addressing discourse around gender and body modification. The medium of ethnography here serves to contextualise the experiences of Somali women so that iNGOs, which sometimes influence public health practice, can have a cultural 'blueprint'. Additionally this thesis illuminates the complexities of body modification, including female genital cutting, and the influences and constraints women have when working on their bodies. In presenting the moral deliberations women undergo when it comes to extreme forms of body modification this thesis aims to guide more nuanced understanding and approaches to public health practice.

For my mom

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A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

In this thesis, I refer to Somaliland as a state, country, and nation, distinct from Somalia. The term 'Somali' refers to both the dominant language (*af Soomaaliga*) and to the Somali ethnic group (*dadka Soomaalida*), although context differentiates the two.

For ease of reading, all ethnographic quotes are in English but some passages include the original Somali words. Somali words, including ones of Arabic origin, which are numerous, appear *italicised* in the text.

When Somali words including those of Arabic origin appear, the Somali orthography is used. Many of the graphemes in the Somali orthography are markedly distinct from their replicas in European languages, such as the 'x' and 'c', and should not be confused with their English equivalents. For a succinct guide on pronunciation please see the introduction to *Colloquial Somali* (Orwin, 1995) available to preview online via Google books or alternatively consult other online resources. Lastly, Somali spellings are often non-standardized and the phonetically formed orthography is sometimes used differently by various users. With this in mind I have followed the usages favoured by my friends, informants, and research collaborators.

My study of the Somali language began in 2009-2010 when I first lived in Hargeisa. I formally studied Somali with Dr. Martin Orwin at the School of Oriental and African Studies from 2013-2014, and one academic term in 2016. I continued this study of the language with Cabdixakiim Cabdilaahi Cumar while in Somaliland for 18 months during my fieldwork. During the 'writing-up' phase of this thesis (2016-2017) I frequently contacted Cabdixakiim Cabdilaahi Cumar, Idris Mohamoud Abdi, and John Taitt along with Amal Ahmed Osman, Fadumo Elmi Dahir, and Deka Abdiweli Jama for further clarification on the Somali language and its usage.

I frequently consulted *Colloquial Somali* (Orwin 1995) and Dr. Orwin was a generous and knowledgeable reference on all aspects of Somali language and poetry. All errors in spelling and translation are my own.

GLOSSARY

The Latin alphabet was officially adopted for the orthography of the Somali language in the 1972 (Orwin, 1995). Words are spelt phonetically; however, the long vowels and short vowels, single and geminate consonants which constitute the morphemes of Somali frequently elude systematic standardisation in lay writing. With this in mind I have used the standardized spellings of Somali throughout the dissertation as much is possible, and where not possible I have consulted Somali-speaking collaborators for their input. While Somali spelling can often differ dramatically, it goes without saying that any mistakes in language use are my own.

Afaartanbax-----	a celebration 40 days after the birth of a baby
Akhlaaq-----	moral
Anshax, cafiif-----	morality
Aqal-----	house, hut
Aroos-----	marriage, wedding celebration, after the nikah
Awliyo Allah-----	saintly individuals in Islamic history who inspire and provide guidance
Awliyo-----	saints, pious or chosen ones
Baraanbur / buraanbur-----	poem sung by women
Bisha malabka-----	honeymoon
Bissinka-----	‘in the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate’
Caado qab, dhiig-----	menstruate / menstruation
Caruur-----	children
Casri / casriyee, dhaqan ka tagid, ilbaxnimo-----	modern / modernize / modernity
Cibbaado, dhowrsanaan, tuudis, baryo Alle, taqwo-----	piety
Cilaaj-----	Islamic healing centre
Deeq, deeqsinimo / faxal, faxnaan / miciin / sikhinnimo / calooljileec-----	generosity
Deggan / degganaan, xayo-----	modest / modesty
Dhaqan wanaagsan, cafiif, samaan, toolmoonaan--	virtue, virtuous (lit. good culture)
Duco, dua, salaad/t-----	prayer
Eexis, kalkacayl, khayr, naraxriis -----	benevolence
Faliye-----	diviners

Farsamada gacanta-----hand skills (referring to cooking, knitting, henna, reading and writing)

Fatwo/a-----religious decree issued under Islamic law

Gu-----main rainy /wet season, season of long rains from April to June ('Spring')

Gud / gudan / gudaal, gudniin----- circumcise / circumcised / circumcision

Hadith-----one of various reports describing the words, actions, or habits of the Islamic prophet Muhammad

Halal-----permissible, lawful in Islamic law

Haram-----forbidden, unlawful in Islamic law

Isku duumbni, midinimo, isku dhawaan, wada shaqayn, isgarabsi, wadajir--solidarity

Jacayl, cashaq ----- love

Jibbo-----a state of religious ecstasy

Maaddiyaad, lacag jacayl----- materialism, (lit. money love)

Maadii, damacci, cirweyn, dhuuni-----materialist, one who loves materials, greedy

Meher-----dowry, money or gold promised to the bride herself

Nikah----- marriage contract, marriage agreement

Qaadiiri / Qaadiiriya-----Somali Sufi order

Qaat-----mild, leafy, green narcotic plant

Qabiil-----tribe, clan, race, nation

Qiyam-----value

Quruxbadan / qurux lex / quruxsan / filsan----- beautiful, pretty

Reer galbeedka--the west (lit. family/clan/tribe/nationality/ethnicity west/western)

Ruux, cibaado, rooxaniyad-----spirit

Salat al-Asr-----afternoon prayer

Salat al-Maghrib-----sunset prayer

Sheikha-----female sheikh

Shidan (slang), ifaya, dhalaalaya, waad nuuraysaa-----'shinning', you are shinning

Shukaansi, jacayl, caashaq-----romance, (love, to fall in love)

Subag /Ghee-----locally purified butter

Tahriib-----illegal migration

Tukasho-----praying

Ummul-----childbirth

Xaammil, uur, rimman(aan)-----pregnant, pregnancy
Xeer-----custom, rule, regulation, constitution, traditional law
Yarad-----bride price, money paid to the bride's family during the nikah

Clothing Index

Women's clothing

Abaya-----A loose and ankle-length black robe or dress
Dirac-----Often colourful, a loose, long dress that drapes to the ankles, kaftan.
There are different fabrics and qualities of dirac; for example, a sheer polyester dirac is worn for weddings and important events
Dirac sheed-----a cotton dirac worn around the house
Dirac guntino-----a sheer polyester dirac with jewels sewn or glued to the fabric, worn at weddings
Googgarad-----underskirt, petticoat
Hijab-----headscarf
Jilbaab-----an Islamic style full-length garment that is loose and covers both the head and hands
Niqab-----face veil
Shalmad-----large rectangular scarf worn with the dirac; comes in different colours, prints, and fabric qualities

Men's clothing

Khamiis-----also known as a thawb/thobe, dishdasha, kandura, jalabiyyah; ankle-length garment with long sleeves
Taqiyah-----short, rounded skullcap



Shalmad

Outfit worn to
weddings or important
events



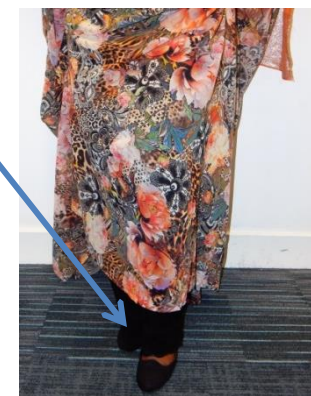
Shalmad



Modelled by
Deka Abdiweli Jama



Dirac



Googgarad

Dirac Sheed:
Front and back view



Modelled by Deka Abdiweli

Shalmad



Googgarad





Modelled by Deka Abdiweli Jama

Jilbaab and Niqab



Modelled and photos by
Hodan Ahmed Hussein



Jilbaab: side and
back view



Niqab



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* * * *

Names and identities and some details have been altered to protect the anonymity of individuals concerned.

All the photos are my own unless stated otherwise.

* * * *

Chapter 1: Introduction

I'm sitting in a classroom on the third floor of a crumbling concrete building in downtown Hargeisa with thirty young, unmarried women.

To get here I took the familiar *Jigjigayar* bus from the main road near my house at *Asar* (afternoon prayer, typically around 3pm) prayer. I sat in my favourite seat, the row closest to the front of the bus that doesn't cross the invisible line where only men sit, window side. Sitting near the front gives me space to breathe without being squished in the back, and I can see who gets on and off. The window means I don't have to move when an old person struggles onto the bus, and I can control whether or not I open or close the window, or the filthy curtain. I love this seat.

I sat and waited in the Friday afternoon heat while passengers climbed on and off. I travelled past shops that were opening for the day, *qaat* stalls filled with men relaxing and chewing, goats on top of cars eating tree leaves. I saw soldiers holding AK-47s guarding the presidential palace, people with no legs pulling themselves through the dirt beside the road, taxis waiting outside Hargeisa Group Hospital to take sick people back home to their families. The bus bumped down the road.

I knew the routine: pass this, turn here, slow there, dodge this, tighten my *hijab*, pull my sunglasses down from on top of my head, throw my *shalmad* over my right shoulder, put my bag on the same shoulder to keep my *shalmad* from slipping, yell "*ii stag!*" (stop for me!) push my neighbour's leg signaling I'm getting off, hold my *dirac* and *gogora* in my right hand while steadying myself with my left as I shuffle off the bus and emerge into the heat.

I wait for the bus to pass, looking back at all the curious faces staring out at me as it carried on. This time of day it isn't too terrifying to cross the road, but I was still cautious. The cars and drivers give me anxiety, crossing the road is tempting fate. I run past the crumbling military tank statue, a memorial from the war.

Not too far now.

I walk quickly, with purpose, not moving my eyes from ahead of me. I had entered a new psychological phase by the time I started classes at *Qoys Kaab* (literally “family support”). I was channeling my inner 'Zen', *no matter how much I am harassed, I will stay Zen*. This time there was only a little heckling and not too much laughing. *Don't look, you are Zen*, I told myself. I could still see entire cafes of men stopping to stare, drivers of cars poking their heads out the window to get a better look. I could feel the men I passed turning around to watch me walk away. Perhaps it was real or perhaps it was my paranoia.

At this point in my fieldwork I was reaching my psychological limits after regularly having stones thrown at me or groups of young boys tormenting me. I craved the safety of my house, my students, and my friends. *My friends at Qoys Kaab will protect me*. Step over the sewer, then safety.

Leaving the glare of the sun I walked through two sets of metal doors. A cat scrambled out of a pile of garbage and ran past my feet. I reached the first landing and was greeted by the now familiar painting of a city skyline filled with mosques and the words, *The Prophet (PBUH) said, “Allah loves excellence from us in whatever we do”* in English. I climbed four flights of stairs to reach the classroom we borrowed from Islamic Online University (IOU).

I hurried into my classroom for a seat by the window, fresh air was a priority in the heat given the layers of clothing I was growing accustomed to. I saved a seat for my friend Mariam who sat beside me, she always helped me when I didn't understand the lectures. The other girls filed in, chatting, laughing, and sharing selfies they took over the week.

--

I didn't fit in, but in some ways I felt like I did.

I am not Somali; I don't have a clan. I am not Muslim; I don't pray.

I am a woman, I want a partner and a family one day, and I want to continue to learn and improve myself.

I was welcomed by Nada, the founder of *Qoys Kaab*. I was welcomed by Mariam, my friend and confidante. That was enough for the other 50-100 young girls and teachers to welcome me too.

--

Tiny, confident, intelligent Nada introduced the guest lecturer for the next few lessons, Cabdinasser Dheeg Ciise. He proudly walked in, set up his computer and opened a PowerPoint. Cabdinasser is an accountant at Nurradiin Secondary School and a writer. He writes books on marriage. He will lecture us on marriage today.

The other girls in my class, the Khadija Class (each cohort was named after one of the Prophet's wives), dutifully opened their notebooks and uncapped their pens. Mariam pulled her desk closer to mine so we could whisper about the parts of his lecture that I didn't understand. I slumped in my chair, sweaty and already tired, but eager to hear what this man might tell a room of 30 unmarried young women about marriage.

With his hands resting on his potbelly Cabdinasser launched into a two-hour sermon titled "The Things Women do that Men Hate." He barely paused for air. His orating skills were impressive, if exhausting. I scribbled notes as Mariam helped translate the Somali and Arabic. We were transfixed, albeit for different reasons I am sure. The young women were gaining insight into the ways men think, so many things they should avoid! I was noting his sources of knowledge, his tone, the authority in his words.

Then he switched slides, I was struggling to maintain pace with his words in one ear and Mariam's translation in the other. I looked up on the stained and cracked wall, barely illuminated with the projector light this appeared:

Xuquuqaha....

- *Xaqa rabi kugu leeyahay*
- *Xaqa xaasku kugu leeyahay*
- *Xaqa ruuxda(naftaadu) kugu leedahay*
- *Saddexdan xuquuqood mid kastawaxa la rabaa inaad sideeda u gudato una fuliso, adigoo raaacaya habka ay shareecaddeenu tilmaamayso.*

Rights.....

- *Right for God*
- *Right for Spouse*
- *Right for the soul*

- *Every one of these three rights needs to be fulfilled though the Sharia of Islam*

What Cabdinasser meant was that every person, under Islam, has the right to worship Allah, the right to find a husband/wife, and the right to develop themselves. Later in his sermon he expanded on this idea, suggesting that women should only have three types of relationships: (1) a relationship with their husband, (2) a relationship with themselves, and (3) a relationship with Allah. He encouraged us to better ourselves, better our relationship with our husband, and better our relationship with Allah. He lectured us for nearly three hours on how to do this, using personal examples, stories and poetry.

“One important relationship we must be wary and sceptical of are relationships with other women in the community. They don’t always have our best interest at heart, they may be jealous, they may lead us astray from our other relationships through bad behavior,” my notebook reads.

His words felt a bit silly; we were part of a movement, *Dugsiga Qoys Kaab*. A school created by women, led by women, and all the students were women. We met every week to learn how to better ourselves, how to meet and please a husband, and how to better serve Allah. At the same time we created a community of women. We shared selfies, we made plans to visit each other’s house, we went out for tea, we walked together to the bus.

Suddenly the *Maghreb* call to prayer sounded, I looked out the window and could see the sun falling behind the clouds. Night was coming. This was my favourite prayer, the sound of the *adhan* (the call from the muezzin summoning worshipers to the mosque) floating across the city, the bustle of men filing into the mosque, calm descending upon the chaos of downtown Hargeisa.

Screech, chatter, more screeching. The students were pushing the chairs and filing into the hallway. I pushed my way out of the classroom with Mariam. If we didn’t move quickly we would be caught in the classroom. The young women dutifully formed their rows for prayer with Nada leading them at the front, while I stood to the side watching and waiting. Cardboard boxes, paper, and extra scarves were used as make shift prayer mats. The women were uniform in their movements, softly muttering prayer, creating unity and sisterhood in that moment.

Mariam and I left with other friends from the course. They always walked me to my bus after class, through the busy downtown, past the young men who usually harassed me when I was on my own. With them I felt like I had a girl-gang, nobody seemed to bother us. If they did, we laughed at them, or they guided me in how to respond, usually urging me to ignore them. I felt safe.

At the *Jigjiayar* bus station we kissed goodbye, they would walk further through the market to the buses towards New Hargeisa. I crouched down to kiss their cheeks, or the *niqab* covering their faces. “See you next week” I always said. “Inshallah” they always said back. “Yes, inshallah.”

1.1 Introduction

This thesis is about Somali women. It is about the lives they lead. It is about their triumphs, failures, and hopes. It is about the changes generations of women have undergone, and the transformations they undergo throughout the life of this world and beyond.

A growing number of historical, political, developmental, journalistic, and anthropological representations and moral evaluations of the lives of Somali women are implicitly, if not self-consciously, “feminist” in orientation. They often rely on moral concepts such as social and gendered inequality, patriarchal oppression, and subjugation (Abdalla 2006; Ali 2007; Carson 2016; Gabobe 2014; Hashi 2016) to depict Somali women, their lives, and their situations; whether in academic work or analysis of literature and poetry (Farah 1970, 2012; Jama 1991; Kapteijns 1995, 1999, 1999, 2009; Kapteijns and Ali 1995, 1999, 2001; Mohamed 2010, 2014; Samatar, S. 1980) that provide descriptions of gender roles (Abdullahi 2001; Warsame 2002), diasporic life (Affi 2014; Hammond 2013; Jinnah and Lowe 2015; Johansen 2016), peace and development (Hassan et al. 2004; Ingiriis 2015; Rayale et al. 2015; Walls et al. 2017), piety (Awale 2014, Cawaale 2013, 2014; Declich 2000; Samatar, A. 2005; Tiilikainen 2010a, 2010b, 2014), or even violence (Africa Watch Committee 1990; Gardner and El-Bushra 2004; Network Against FGM/C in Somaliland 2015; Hicks 1996). Somali women tend to be written about through two lenses- the passive victim and the agentive rebel (Abdi 2007; Ahmed S. 1999; Cumar 2014; Dirie 1998).

This thesis aims to problematize these representations and moral evaluations by relying on Somali women’s descriptions of their intimate relationships. In this thesis intimacy refers

to a feeling created in the building, and sometimes rupture, of close relationships. Intimacy refers to a closeness, not necessarily proximity, between people and groups. Couples, friends, and communities of women can achieve a form of closeness predicated on unity or even disagreement through pious ideals, or age and education level (see Chapter 5). Intimacy indicates deep knowledge of an Other or the desire to get to know the unknown; whether across gendered relationships (see Chapter 4) or divine divides (see Chapter 6). Intimacy can refer to physical and sexual closeness (see Chapter 7), but it can also refer to feelings, emotions, and knowledge of the self or others. Not only do a husband and wife build a physical relationship, but a woman also gets to know her physical, emotional, and spiritual selves. Intimacy is not always positive in nature and can sometimes be violent or destructive; for example in cases of domestic dispute or lifelong experiences of female genital cutting. Greater intimacy does not imply moving forward with one's life and relationships, in fact it can result in confusion and uncertainty (see Chapter 6).

To understand intimacy in Somaliland I draw on observations of everyday life in the family, on the bus, at the market, cooking, in worship, at rites of passage like marriages, and the everyday conversations I had with women. This is not to suggest that Somali women don't encounter social inequality, patriarchal oppression, or subjugation; rather this thesis aims to present a counter-narrative to the 'flattening out' of the complexity of women's lives.

Much of the writing on Somali women is presented through two simplistic frames- whether it is women's involvement in peace processes, women in development, violence against women, or female genital cutting (FGC¹)- which are in danger of underrepresenting women through "a single story" (Adichie 2009). As a response to this, this thesis endeavours to weave together the multiple threads of women's lives, and rather than resulting in a complex pattern of analysis it reveals that women are many things, at many times; they are not just passive victims or agentive rebels. They are consciously engaged in deliberation, contestation, and discussion about the kinds of lives they want to live.

Ultimately, this thesis aims to (1) explore women's everyday intimate relationships to illuminate the complex nature of life and the life course, while providing a counter narrative to the 'flattening out' of Somali women; (2) reconfigure life course models to include a theory of entanglement. This includes (a) building on Mbembe's (1992, 2001) theory of entanglement by revealing a simultaneity of moralities, time, and selves; and

¹ From here on I will refer to female genital cutting (*gud*) as FGC unless otherwise noted.

recontextualizing entanglement in everyday experiences; (b) analysing how women negotiate sometimes competing moralities and values; and (c) extending temporality in the life course to include the life of the other world. Next, this thesis aims to (3) propose an introductory theory of destiny as a 'middle ground' by focusing on everyday experiences of belief in God's omnipotence and 'working' on destiny; and finally to (4) identify the emergence of a 'new morality' being forged by young, urban women. This new morality reflects their conceptions of what it means to be modern, and illuminates a counter-narrative to pervading discourse on Islam and women in Somalia/Somaliland.

This thesis is only a snapshot and a momentary glimpse into the intimate lives of Somali women in a post-war and globally connected society. Over the course of 18 months I observed and came to learn about the relationships women have with their bodies, the sisterhoods they form, their communications with the divine, and the realities of marriage and family life. As the opening vignette shows these intimacies reflect their supposed rights to a relationship with God, their spouse, and their soul; the fact that Cabdinasser deliberately warns against female friendship suggests that they are in fact powerful and meaningful relationships in women's lives.

It was through observing intimacy that I learned about key phases of the life course; including FGC, completion of education, marriage, childbirth, and motherhood, thus illuminating the potential for value conflict and contestation in life course transformation. This thesis builds on scholarly work that examines the values that inform what it means to live an ethical life, including the life of the other world or destiny. This thesis demonstrates that the values important to Somali women are actively reconstituted in an increasingly global and Islamist context.

By focusing this ethnography on notions of moral development over the life course the women with whom I work understand destiny is a 'phase' that is worked towards and worked on. Destiny is a concept in women's hopeful imaginaries of what their future may be, and it is a reality where there is the potential for consequence if one's 'good' deeds do not outweigh the 'bad' come Judgement Day. Destiny as a transitional phase within the life course also indicates that models of development based on 'stages' fail to capture the temporal complexity of life.

The premise of this thesis is that to undertake a study of moral development over the life course, one needs first of all to put the concepts of both morality and life course under

ethnographic scrutiny. To do this, I suggest that it is important to begin from an ethnographic exploration of how morality is conceptualised, experienced and negotiated within everyday intimacies. This methodological and theoretical undertaking begins by tracing life course development in anthropology. Next, it contextualises destiny as part of the life course and in practices of moral development. Then, it locates the study of ethics and morality in anthropology, specifically with value ethics as the foci of change and transformation. Finally, it considers the entanglement of time, selves, and moralities over the life course.

1.2 Life course development

Dhallinyaro waa rajo-ku-nool, waayeelna waayo-waayo
Youth live on hope, the elderly on nostalgia
--Somali proverb (Bulhan 93, 2013)

Studies of life course development in anthropology began with Margaret Mead's work in Oceania. She first published *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928) as a study of young women's transformation from childhood through adolescence to "old age". She argued that in Samoa as young women approach adolescence they do not face the same emotional and psychological anxiety as seen in the United States. She concluded this was because Samoan girls were not pressured to choose from among a variety of conflicting values like American girls. She followed this seminal text with *Growing up in New Guinea* (1930), which traced the educational processes of children; including how they learned respect, discipline, and gained intelligence through adolescence. Her studies guided anthropologists in concluding that human behaviour is malleable, and that cultural variation influences sex roles. Additionally, she also sparked great contestation as to the accuracy of her ethnographic conclusions, and, although her work has been very influential, it has also been subsequently undermined and challenged².

Building on Mead's foundational works Whiting and Edwards (1988) implemented a cross-cultural comparison of social behaviour of children across twelve different societies (located in Kenya, Liberia, North India, Japan, the Philippines, Mexico and the United States). They considered the ways that age, gender, and culture affect development over the life course. Their research found that children learn and practice patterns of behaviour that characterise their most routine interpersonal interactions; and these are dependent

² See Shankman 2009 for analysis of the Mead-Freeman 'debate'.

on gendered notions of daily living, economic pursuits, the division of labour, and the organization of people in space.

This led to further anthropological works exploring how morality is implicit in practices of development; for example Levine et al. (1994) examined patterns of child development amongst the Gusii of Kenya. Levine et al. compared behaviours of infant care with those of the U.S. and illuminated Gusii practices of holding the baby so that it is in constant body contact, and showed that it is soothed through its mother's touch and breastfeeding. In comparison, in the U.S. babies are only held part of the time, and interaction is marked by intense face-to-face communication (or "motherese"). They showed that in each society departure from these norms is offensive.

Building on this Shweder et al. (1995) show the ways that morality is implicit in practice through his comparative analysis *Who sleeps by whom revisited?* He asked families in Hyde Park (U.S.) and Oriya (India) how they would arrange a hypothetical seven member family in 1, 2, and up to 7 rooms. His work shows how everyday social practices reveal moral and social meaning. Additionally, Stevenson (2011) explores developmental expectations in Jimma, Ethiopia and shows that anthropological assumptions of child development over the life course must also be contextualised in socio-economic and health contexts.

Other studies have focused on the implicit learning of morality, notably Lewis' (2008) work amongst Mbendjele hunter-gatherers in the Congo. Lewis analyses the concept of *ekila* as a taboo that structures social relations and is implicitly learned, understood, and practiced different over the life course. Some studies have considered intracultural and interpersonal conflict as part of life course development, notably Kleinman (2006). Kleinman analyses psychiatric case studies, including a former patient name Winthrop Cohen, who was diagnosed and treated for clinical depression. In his analysis of Cohen, Kleinman forces readers to consider what it means to live a moral life amidst uncertainty and danger. He introduces potential conflict between conventional morality and personal ethics.

Each of these works has helped shape the ways that this thesis approaches and analyses life course development; including an exploration into culture and morality as potentially distinct categories, moral development through practice, and the contextualisation of moral behaviour historically, politically, and economically. This literature and the ethnographic material collected for this thesis have led to a conceptualisation of contemporary Somali women's life course according to an 'ideal' 13-phase model that I present below: (1) *afaartan bax*³, (2) FGC, (3) wearing hijab to school, (4) begin household responsibilities, (5) finish reading the Quran for the first time, (6) first menarche, (7) secondary school, (8) university, (9) marriage and first sexual intercourse, (10) childbirth, (11) motherhood, (12) menopause, and finally (13) death of husband.

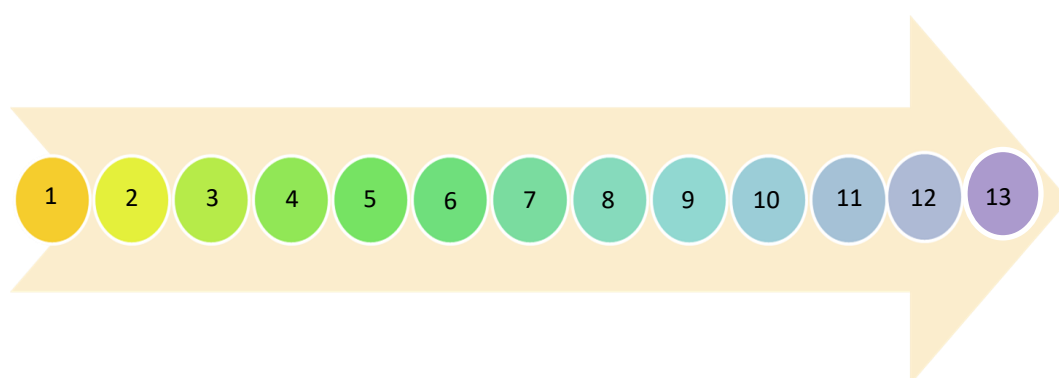


Figure 1: 'Ideal' 13-phase model of the life course

This 'ideal' model reflects many women's conception of the normal and desirable phases in life. However, this ideal life course scheme is not achieved by everyone, nor is it desired by everyone. For example, rural and poor women may not attend secondary school or university. Alternatively, a woman may never conceive, or her child may suffer a perinatal death, and she will perhaps care for her sister's children and hope for her own in the life of the other world.

This model illuminates transformations women undergo physically, spiritually, developmentally, and within the unit of the family. For women life course transitions tend to centre on processes of gendering and changes in one's body, responsibility and status, rather than age. The process of gendering begins as soon as a baby is born; Warsame (2002) notes that in traditional pastoralist families the news of a mother giving birth to a boy was often welcomed with a celebration. Well-off families would slaughter an animal, and less fortunate fathers would give something away; all to show gratitude for Allah

³ A celebration 40 days after the birth of a baby.

bestowing a son. In contrast, baby girls were not welcomed with a corresponding feast⁴ (32). Warsame suggests that the “discrimination” against girls incited women to compose songs and poetry that reflected their emotions towards the “glorification” of boys and the “undervaluing” of girls. Some mothers composed songs “regretting” the birth of a daughter⁵, while other mothers sympathised with their new born daughters and expressed the “unjustified treatment of women in general” (ibid. 33) through poetry⁶. Kapteijns (2009) also notes that songs sung to babies tend to describe boys as being brave and girls as obedient⁷.

Regardless of the gender of the baby, after forty days mothers celebrate the baby’s health and the end of the mother’s rest and isolation with a celebration called the *afaartan bax*. The mother is now considered strong enough to resume normal activities like going to the market, and doing household chores, and she has healed enough to engage in sexual intercourse. If the family has the resources they will have cake, sambusa, and tea to celebrate.

Many mothers begin the process of physically gendering a baby girl by pressing her clitoris to prevent it from growing as she ages. In an excerpt from my field notes I write about a conversation with Basr, Casha, and Casha’s sister:

“I then say that I read an article where a woman likened the clit to a man’s penis⁸. She wrote that people believe that a girl becomes a woman when her clit is cut, that way she no longer metaphorically resembles a man.

They immediately say this woman is a liar, this is not true. Then the sisters argue a little, the sister says that maybe the clit can protrude and they ask me what I think, does the clit look like a penis if it is left untouched? Basr and I tell them that no, in no way does it resemble a penis. They say the woman who wrote this is a liar, that nobody thinks this.

⁴ Despite a baby girls “potential worth” in bringing bride wealth to the family (Warsame 2002, 32).

⁵ See Appendix A

⁶ See Appendix B.

⁷ It is important to note that the songs sung to babies do not immediately reflect their ‘lot in life,’ for example Warsame has noted that women are taught to embody contradiction in what is expected of them. Additionally in Chapter 4, and in this chapter, I show that women learn to strike a balance between contradictory expectations; they are not only taught to be obedient, they are also taught to be strong and smart (Warsame 2002).

⁸ Van Der Kwaak, Anke. 1992. ‘Female Circumcision and Gender Identity: A Questionable Alliance?’ *Social Science & Medicine* 35, no. 6: 777-87.

They say that when a baby girl is born the mother will take her home and massage her legs, she shows me by rubbing her own legs then she says that the mother will make the baby calm and comfortable and then press her clit, hard. She shows me by using her thumb to press on her leg. She is pressing really hard, rubbing her thumb into her leg. She says the mothers do this to the baby girl's clit so it doesn't grow and show between her legs. I ask what's the point in this if she is going to have it cut when she is 6 anyways. They say it's for culture, nothing else."

Until around the age of six most babies and young children live in the world of women. They are cared for by their mother and other women and girls⁹ in the house. It is only around age six that boys and girls begin to be separated and learn the virtues appropriate for their gender. Young urban girls begin wearing the hijab during kindergarten because it is required by all schools (state, private, Quranic) and because young girls become more 'visible' in society¹⁰.

Around the same time that they begin wearing the hijab, young girls are considered ready for FGC. Many girls are cut between the ages of six and eight, however the exact age depends on many factors; including the *Gu rains*¹¹, the return of family from abroad, and the schedule of the traditional birth attendant (TBA) or midwife. These factors often coincide in a "cutting season" in the summer when the diaspora coordinate the cutting of their daughters with their urban and rural family; thus coordinating a time of plenty for rural family, with summer holidays for urban and diaspora family to facilitate the TBA/midwife's schedule.

At this age many young girls begin taking on household responsibilities, often shared with the other women of the house. They are expected to help with the cooking, cleaning, caring of young or ill siblings, and running errands at the shop or market. As young girls take on these responsibilities they begin learning practical skills, as well as a sense of duty to one's home and family.

⁹ Girls of all ages will have caring responsibilities for a baby; it depends on the girl's age as to what level of responsibility she is given.

¹⁰ Some mothers have their daughters wear the hijab before they can even walk.

¹¹ This tends to be in April/May and is primary cropping season for agropastoralists.

Later, between the ages of seven and thirteen, urban girls are expected to complete reading the Quran for the first time¹². This is very important to the pious development of young girls and is often marked with a small celebration. For urban women, finishing the Quran for the first time symbolizes a young girl's intelligence, piety, and closeness to God. One friend, Nimco, describes her experience:

"When I finished the Quran, I was feeling so happy, this was a feeling that I couldn't describe but I've never felt so at peace. I had a responsibility because Allah said we should do everything that the Quran says, and to know that I was ever so close to Allah than anyone who hasn't finished the Quran. It was one of my greatest accomplishments and it was a dream that became my reality. I'll be forever grateful."

The next phase is first menstruation. Not only does this signal the young woman's fertility and potential desirability, it also begins her cultivation of pain as a virtue, and the development of her skill to differentiate between good and bad pain¹³.

By the time young urban women enter secondary school and university they are well underway in their development of piety and knowledge, both of which are important to their conceptions of what it means to be a modern woman. It is very important for young women, who have the economic means and familial support, to graduate from secondary school and university. Additionally, women who themselves did not attend secondary school or have no formal education wish for their daughters to have such opportunities. For most young women graduating from secondary school and earning a university degree represent intelligence, however this 'secular' intelligence is equally important to textually informed Quranic knowledge; both necessary to attract a potentially suitable husband¹⁴.

Women's intelligence has historically served as a symbol of their social standing, and is a virtue that women must balance in their 'shining' (see Chapter 4). For example, there is a famous saying "Breast milk and intelligence cannot co-exist" (Abokor 1991 as cited in Warsame 2002, 31), which suggests that women are 'naturally' inferior. This is contradicted by the fact that intelligence was a major factor considered by young men who

¹² I do not know if rural girls are expected to complete this phase, I only spoke to urban girls and women about their experiences and expectations.

¹³ See Chapter 4 for more on menstruation, FGC, and pain as a virtue.

¹⁴ A 'suitable husband' often includes Somali men living abroad. For more on transnational love, relationships and family life see Neveu Kringelbach 2013, 2014, 2016a, 2016b.

wanted to get married. Traditionally young men would test a potential wife's intelligence through complicated riddles, only asking for her hand in marriage if she could successfully solve them (Warsame 2002, 31). Although riddles are still popular today, a degree certificate is the new test for women¹⁵. Women have their own tests for men. I observed many women negotiate financial and material gifts from men as a test of their love and commitment. Giving gifts like sweets, sending a taxi to pick her up, and spending money indicate that a man has the resources to care for a woman financially and emotionally. Gifts can be an expression of love, and a means of creating romance in a couple¹⁶. It is during this time in a woman's life that not only is she tested by balancing how much she shines with her intelligence, beauty, and modesty, but she is also testing men for their resourcefulness, love, and capacity for romance.

After university or in late teens, women enter the next phase of their life course, becoming a wife. Somaliland women's age of first marriage varies, however it is now generally later than the historical literature suggests. Lewis (1998b) writes that most nomadic girls used to marry between twelve and fifteen years old, with few single at age twenty (135). Kapteijns (1995) notes that at menarche young girls become eligible for marriage, and are considered to have mastered skills like cooking, cleaning, and tending to livestock (250). Warsame (2002) suggests that it is becoming common for Somali women to stay single into their 30s, especially women who study¹⁷. During my research one midwife described a difficult labour of a young woman aged 14 who walked to the rural clinic with her 16 year old husband. I met women who eloped with their husbands at age 16. I also met women in their early 20s who were hoping for their first marriage. The only women I happened to meet who were single (no first marriage) into their 30s were those that either suffered from long term health problems like epilepsy and were 'ineligible' for marriage, or educated diaspora women who returned to Somaliland. I did observe that the more formal education my informants had, the later they got married¹⁸. However, similar to Warsame

¹⁵ As well as textually informed Quranic knowledge, and a balance between one's insides and outsides in the cultivation of virtues.

¹⁶ For more on love and 'exchange' in relationships see Cole 2014; Cole and Thomas 2009.

¹⁷ For more on gendered educational trajectories and transnational marriage in West Africa see Neveu Kringelbach 2014.

¹⁸ Bongaarts, Mensch, & Blanc (2017) found that in Africa and Asia the association between increased schooling and reproductive behavior is in part due to modification of attitudes and autonomy resulting from exposure to school, not necessarily academic skills at any particular grade level. I can only make observational comments about Somaliland, and further research is needed.

(2002), getting married and becoming a mother at an early age still seems to be the preferred option (54).

Many young women marry men of their choosing, often classmates or neighbours. Many women have their *nikah*¹⁹ near the completion of their university degree and only have an *aroos*²⁰ and move in with their husband once they graduate. For women who do not attend secondary or higher education marriage timing depends on several factors including her family's economic situation; *can they afford to keep the daughter in the house without sending her out to work?* If a girl stays home with her family, or finds work as a house girl she most often leaves the house for errands at the shop or market; thus meeting 'suitable' men may become difficult because she has not had the opportunity to meet and interact with young men that attend school or university. Instead they may rely on personal networks, chance encounters, or Facebook and WhatsApp²¹.

Modern marriage practices tend to include the Islamic ceremony (*nikah*), as well as a wedding celebration (*aroos*). The *nikah* is performed by a sheikh and is conducted according to Islamic law. This is essentially a marriage contract between the bride and groom's families. The bride is not present at the *nikah*, instead her male family represent her. If the groom lives abroad he is represented by his male family. The main part of the contract is regarding the bride price (*yarad*) that the groom and his family pay to the bride's family, and the dowry (*meher*) that the groom will give to the bride. During the *nikah* the bride price is always exchanged while the dowry is only given if the couple divorce (and sometimes not even then). Additionally, male family members, of the bride and the groom, exchange money (the groom's family gives first), called *gabati*. The bride price is often USD or camels²², and the *meher* is now most often in gold jewellery.

According to Warsame (2002), women are entitled to their *meher* after divorce, however she reports that many urban women do not receive any *meher* at all. When women initiate divorce, they are often not entitled to *meher*. And even in cases where women do not initiate the divorce, men make it difficult for their wives so they can avoid paying anything. Often, Warsame notes, the women become "fed up" and relinquish their *meher* "to get

¹⁹ Marriage contract, or agreement.

²⁰ Wedding celebration after the *nikah*.

²¹ Women who attend school and university also meet men through these avenues.

²² Young single men have now taken to protesting high bride prices (Nairobi News 2017). This is a sentiment often echoed by my young male students, who indicated that the increase in bride price is due to increased competition with men who come from abroad to marry local women.

their freedom” (55-56). She notes that this has become a common problem and women are left without financial security after divorce. Warsame’s findings in 2002 echo similar sentiments and experiences by women during the time of this research.

The man must also “buy her dowry” if the man and woman have intercourse after the *nikah*, Islamic wedding, and decide to divorce before the *aroos*, or wedding celebration (a period of varying length- days to years- when most couples do not live together). This happened to one informant who had intercourse with her husband after the *nikah* and requested divorce before the wedding celebration. She wanted a divorce because he was ‘not good in bed;’ however their encounter resulted in a child that she now raises as a single mother with financial support from the father.

Not all women have an *aroos*, some don’t have the money, and others find them to be ‘un-Islamic’ for the music and dancing that takes place. Some women will have an *aroos* but forbid music and dancing. Women’s poetry (*baraanbur*) is recited at the *aroos*, and food and sweets are served. Gifts from the groom’s family (*sooryo*) are often delivered to the new couple as part of the bride price. These often include household items like furniture or cooking equipment.

In marriages of choice young women are still expected to inform their parents for approval. Some marriages are arranged, but nowadays most young women are consulted by their families and consent to their marriage partner. Some couples still elope but typically to avoid an unwanted marriage (Lewis 1981, 14-15), if their family opposes their marriage due to their age (too young), or if the couple cannot afford a wedding. One woman I met eloped at age 13; she and her husband fled to a different city and elicited the police to protect them during the *nikah* from objecting family members.

Modern marriage practices differ from those documented in the literature. Much of the early literature on Somali marriage, and African systems of marriage focuses on kinship systems and clan organisation (Lewis 1981; Radcliffe-Brown 1950). Kinship groups maintained political harmony and mutual economic support through practices of intermarriage. Men and women married exogamously to increase the likelihood of peaceful conflict resolution (and conflict prevention) and resource sharing by extending

kinship to some members of other groups²³ (Kapteijs 1995, 246; Warsame 2002, 43-44). Near the end of the colonial period, marriage practices changed to include a new preference for endogamy. This shift occurred because commercial capital began transforming pastoral society, so much so that urban marriage was a means of consolidating capital within a small group rather than creating reciprocal duties with another group (Kapteijs 1995, 255). Although there was a change in marriage practice, there remained few if any, alternatives to marriage for women (ibid. 250).

In the historical literature, analysis of Somali marriage practices has shifted focus from that of kinship and clan (Lewis 1961, 1981) to more recently that of class and wealth (Kapteijs 1995). The literature has also indicated a shift in bride wealth practices; where bride wealth used to be paid in livestock it is now, particularly in urban areas, paid in money (most often USD). Money was also often exchanged independently of approval or assistance from kin. This resulted in more marriages based on a relationship between two people and their families, rather than out of economic necessity or as a tool of peace (ibid. 225). This shift in bride wealth practices has had lasting influence in today's marriage practices, where women seek relationships based on trust between two people and their families.

After marriage it is generally expected that a woman will be obedient, use her economic skills and body for her husband, and bear him children (Cabdinasser *Qoys Kaab* lecture 2016; Kapteijs 1995, 250). Marriage during the colonial period and in some cases today means a separation from the woman's community of birth and an increase in the intensification of her productive and reproductive labour in service of her husband. It also represents the opportunity to accumulate her own social capital by bearing male children who will look after her in old age. This newly married phase can be one of the most stressful times in a young woman's life. She must quickly learn new skills, her work load increases dramatically, and she must work her way 'up' in household standing.

Motherhood as a life phase requires more research as many of my informants tended to be either in the transition to motherhood and are now, during writing up, having their first children, or their children are grown and have left the familial house to start their own families. However, a woman begins at the 'lowest' level when she first enters into

²³ The Somali saying "meel xinijir lagu bururiyay xab baa lagu bururiya," or "a baby should be born in the spot where blood has been spilt" (Warsame 2002, 44) suggests that the exchange of women is a means to a peaceful solution.

marriage and her household duties are vast. As a woman has children she will 'increase' in her household standing; her children will begin to take on duties and if she lives with her husband's family his brothers may take new wives who start at the 'bottom' and work their way up. When her children marry the woman and her husband may live with the eldest son's family, where she will be relieved of many household duties and will have the 'highest' standing.

The fact that women rarely speak of their own death and the afterlife is important to note, particularly because they are important transitional phases that women actively prepare for in their everyday lives. For example, as women's bodies undergo transformations they also consciously work on and discipline their bodies, inside and out, as part of a process of creating an ethical self. This is a life process and involves the learning of virtues, as well as the attainment of skills and abilities; all aspects of women's changing roles. It is through this process that women strive to live an ethical life where their understanding and practice of virtues leads to a life lived in such a way that their good deeds outweigh the bad on Judgement Day. The time of Judgement Day is not specified in Islamic eschatology; however it is when God decides one's destiny in Paradise or Hell. For the women I met, and for many people, it is believed that their destiny is Paradise. It is according to these 13 phases and the temporal extension of time that this thesis seeks to reframe life course models of moral development to include the life of the otherworld, specifically destiny.

1.3 Destiny

A multiplicity of understandings of the afterlife have been well documented in the anthropological literature (see for example, Conklin 2001; Fadiman 1997; Gotlieb, Graham, Gotlieb-Graham 1998; Parry 1989). These explorations have revealed a diversity of ways that people across different cultures 'work' towards entering and being accepted into an afterlife, as well as the ways they hope to 'better' their next life. However, an afterlife has not featured in many theories of moral development over the life course²⁴ (Shweder 2003). This thesis introduces an ethnographic example of moral development over the life course that includes the "life of the other world" (Perho 2001), and proposes a theory of the life course based on life's movement in 6 directions. Throughout this thesis the life of the

²⁴ Spiritual development throughout the life course, particularly in aging populations has been well studied, particularly in developmental psychology and sociology (see for example, Atchley 1997; Burke 1999; Levin 1993; Wink and Dillon 2002).

otherworld (lit. 'next life', *akhirah*), or destiny (lit. God's decree, *qadar*)²⁵, is located in women's spiritual imaginary with real and tangible effects. It is imagined as a sort of utopia where all the 'failures' from the life of this world are reimagined and achieved in the life of the other world. It is a space "where an individuals' existence unfolds in practice;" it is "where they live their lives out and confront the very forms of their death" (Mbembe 2001, 15). For example, if a woman fails at finding lasting love, or has trouble conceiving, it is still possible to achieve these things in one's destiny. Thus destiny is both a spiritual imaginary based on a hopeful utopia, and a lived reality that women work on, through, and towards in their everyday lives.

The life of the other world is a specific understanding of an afterlife, specifically that of Islamic destiny. In what follows I contextualize Islamic destiny within the theological and anthropological contexts; and throughout this thesis I show that the life of the other world is a utopia where one's hopes and dreams from the life of this world can be achieved. Entry into the life of the other world is predicated on doing the best good in the life of this world, where the 'scale' on Judgement Day weighs more heavily on one's 'good' actions and deeds rather than the 'bad'²⁶. Thus, according to my informants 'failures' are reimagined as tests, or the test of *dunya*²⁷, in which one must act well in the face of adversity to 'tip' the scale towards the 'good' and achieve what one believes is one's destiny²⁸.

According to Esposito (2003d) 'destiny,' as written in the Quran, is neither purely understood as an expression of free will nor completely bound by predestination. Many passages argue that individuals have free will²⁹, whereas others suggest that individual lives are predestined³⁰. However, the Quran is clear that absolute power rests with God, "without whose permission or creative act nothing at all occurs" (Esposito 2003d). Early Islamic theology developed multiple understandings of destiny; some emphasize the power

²⁵ *Akhirah* is broader and includes many stages, while *qadar* is more specific and is very similar in meaning to fate or destiny and is applied to both this life and the next; thus whether a person ends up in Paradise or Hell is their ultimate destiny.

²⁶ See Deeb 2006 for more on the calculation of "accounts" on Judgement Day.

²⁷ "Near or nearest; commonly translated as "world," "earth," or "this world." In matters of religious belief and practice, refers to earthly concerns, contrasted with those of God or heavenly concerns (din)" (Esposito 2003c).

²⁸ My friends and informants tended to speak of their destiny only in relation to Paradise, whereas Hell was only referred to as a 'bad' person's (or for someone who has done wrong's) destiny.

²⁹ "Certainly you will be questioned for what you do" (16:93).

³⁰ "And Allah has created you and your work" (37:97)

of the individual to determine their destiny³¹, others deemphasize the power of human will³². Theological discussions around the 10th century between the Mu'tazilites and Ash'arites³³ fail to make clear where the will of God ends and the will of humans begins³⁴. Thus, interpretations of the 'push and pull' between divine and individual will could perhaps be summarized as the following: "Muslims believe that human beings are morally and ethically responsible for their actions but are utterly dependent upon God for the ability and power to act" (Esposito 2003d).

This tension found within Islamic theology resonated with my informants, creating internal strife about the limits of free will and, for many, the strength of their faith. One student said, "teacher, we all think about our destiny and we are all just as confused as you are." All my informants believe that absolute power rests with God, but they don't know to what extent their actions may affect their destiny. One university student told me that we must "act well," when we "do good" better things happen to us in the future. For this student, and many others, acting well indicates a cultivation of virtues that are visible to God, and when He sees you do good, He will give you good in return; thus reinforcing His omnipotence and a unity or oneness with Him. Their articulations about not knowing the extent of their freedom to act (or not³⁵), while simultaneously acknowledging God's omnipotence, suggest an implicit middle road between free will and predestination.

³¹ Abu Ya'la (d. 1066) of the Hanbalite School expressed views including man's free will in action and God's omnipotence. Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) of the Hanbalite school and Abu al-Husayn al-Basri (d. 436/1044) of the Mu'tazilite school advocated for an understanding of free will in destiny (Perho 2001, 62).

³² Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 241/855), Ibn Batta (d. 387/997) of the Hanbalite school expressed deterministic views.

³³ Schools of Islamic theology. The Mu'tazila were strong "proponents of free-will believing that man created his own actions with the power that God had given him." They believe that "if God were to directly create man's actions and then punish him for those actions, while man himself has been deprived of free-will, this would be the height of tyranny and injustice." The Ash'arites believe that "freewill is an illusion" and that "all actions are a direct result of God's will and action, also known as the theory of "acquisition" or *kasb*" (Qadhi 2008).

³⁴ It is important to note that the Mu'tazila and Ash'arites are not only theological schools of thought but also political traditions related to the politics of the day. Thus is it not surprising that one group advocates for determinism because they also suggest it is "God's will" to keep the ruling Umayyads (one of the four major caliphates, or religious successors to the Prophet serving as leaders of the Muslim community) in power; the supporters of free will do so in order to call for an overthrow of the Umayyads.

³⁵ When a woman consciously reflects on how to act, she can also decide how not to act. Thus, not acting is still a moral choice predicated on conscious deliberation (see also Schielke 2009ab).

A “middle road” was articulated by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350)³⁶. He aimed to formulate doctrine that was acceptable for all Muslims regardless of the school they adhered to by drawing from the teachings of schools that are in accordance with the Quran and Sunna, rejecting those that conflict with these sources. According to Ibn Qayyim belief in predestination rests on four articles of faith as presented in the Quran: (1) God knows a thing before it exists; (2) God has foreordained it before it exists; (3) God has willed it before it exists; and (4) God has created it (Ibn Qayyim *Shifa*, 55). Belief in these four articles of faith belies belief in predestination, which belies belief in God’s omnipotence, “man acts according to what God has predestined him to do and cannot act against God’s will, but in spite of this man is a true actor, responsible for his deeds” (Perho 2001, 62). Ibn Qayyim is proposing a compromise between determinism and absolute free will, he presents a middle road.

Ibn Qayyim showed, through doctrinal analysis of Hadith, “that it was possible to believe in an omnipotent God who had predestined man’s acts and still consider that man was, in spite of all this, the true actor and originator of his acts” (ibid. 64). Perho continues, “God has created in man a drive to act and this is the cause of his action. Man is considered the agent, because his act is based on his power, will, and choice” (64-65). For example, God created the ability for man “to perform his daily prayers, but this ability is not enough to make him pray. What is needed is that God allows him to use his ability and perform the prayers” (ibid. 66). God did not necessarily create every act but He is the creator of man’s actions in the general sense as being the creator of everything, “God allows the individual soul to make its choices without interfering” (Ibn Qayyim *Shifa*, 299ff.; ibid. 66).

The middle road Ibn Qayyim outlines between free will and predestination in destiny is perhaps theologically sound, and although it mirrors the experiences of my informants it was difficult for them to explain and describe the middle road they negotiated in the everyday. Through our own theological conversations my female students and their friends from Quranic school attempted to articulate the middle road by explaining parts of Islamic eschatology, specifically the test of life (*dunya*) and Judgement Day. In their elaboration of

³⁶ Although this is considered an atypical Sunni position, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya “did not reject outright the teachings of the various speculative school, but was [...] willing to study the opinions they produced” and advocated for Muslims to “study the writings of the various schools” (Perho 2001, 62). He was influenced by his teacher, Ibn Taymiyya within the Hanbalite school, who was considered a traditionalist yet showed open-mindedness by drawing on Mu’tazilite’s such as Abu al-Husayn al-Basri (d. 436/1044) (who promoted the Sunnite opinion) (ibid.).

these two Islamic concepts I began to understand how they conceived of destiny in their daily lives.

The young women explained that by acting well better things will come to them in the future. They made it clear that bad things can and will happen, even when you strive to “do good,” but they reassured me that “God gives you nothing you can’t handle,” suggesting that these ‘bad’ things are a test from God. I was often told that “God is testing you” whenever something undesirable happens. This ‘test’ from God is the test of life, or the test of *dunya*. Their explanation suggests that they accept God’s omnipotence to ‘test’ them, and they must draw on their “power, will, and choice” to act well during life’s difficulties.

Although women believe many things to be their destiny, and this may vary from woman to woman, and throughout the life course, this thesis predominately focuses on three aspects of destiny that were important for every woman I met; love, marriage, and children. Relationships as related to destiny have been analysed by Carey (2012) and Elliot (2016). Although Carey does not explicitly link his analysis of relationship building in Southern Morocco to destiny, his analysis of uncertainty links the emotions and actions of his informants to the sentiment of confusion expressed by my students. Carey describes the strategies and constraints that a couple, Hicham and Suqayna, encounter in their brief “affair.” He argues that they actively unsettle and cloud their courtship interactions to simultaneously protect their reputations and to leave open the possibility for a lasting relationship. According to Carey they work with the uncertainty the “affair” presents, rather than avoiding it. Uncertainty comes to represent both the potential of and limitations within their relationship; and it is up to the couple to consciously reflect and deliberate how they will work with it. The unknowingness of how their relationship will result (marriage or breakup), and the simultaneous effort to work with uncertainty, is much like the unknowability of one’s destiny. Destiny presents the opportunity for boundless potential if worked towards, yet it is limited by the plan God has set out. The uncertainty of one’s destiny must be worked through if hopes of love, marriage, and children are to be realized.

Similarly, Elliot builds on her Moroccan informants’ unknowability towards their destiny. Elliot writes that for the young Moroccan women beautifying oneself is an integral part of realizing a divinely determined life; they are “helping” their destiny by striking a balance

between beauty and modesty as they stroll the village promenade “looking for” a husband. According to these young women one must always be ready, for one never knows when one will meet their husband. Thus, uncertainty and the “inevitability of divine plans does not imply human inactivity” (2016, 492) rather uncertainty and inevitability [of destiny] is something to be worked on and through.

This thesis builds on the sentiments of uncertainty³⁷, unknowability, and inevitability of destiny to illustrate the many ways women work on, through and towards their destiny. Women do this by working on their bodies, inside and out; by creating sisterhoods and learning not only virtues but also skills and abilities needed to live an ethical life; by working on and through time whether through divination or the *dua istikhara*³⁸; and finally by explicitly learning virtues, skills, and abilities to cope with the realities of marriage. However, conscious deliberation, contestation, and negotiation are key features of working on one’s destiny. Conscious reflection and potential action signify a type of freedom, a freedom predicated on a dialectical relationship with God and binding cultural norms.

Freedom is rooted in conscious reflection, yet this freedom is bound by cultural norms and the unity created with God. This unity is part of ethical self cultivation, dependent on the first person self, and the third person gaze of the world, including God. In other words, knowing oneself is knowing God, and knowing God requires knowing oneself. Thus, individual freedom is predicated on the dialectical relationship with God and is bound by God’s will. Therefore the freedom to act on one’s destiny is dependent on one’s relationship with God, specifically through His creation of one’s capacity to act and one’s will to act within that capacity. Thus, destiny is not a just a theological concept actualized through unconscious or passive action (a type of ‘inaction’) in everyday life; instead destiny is a lived reality with real and actual effect and consequence, it is something to be acted on, worked through, and worked towards.

³⁷ Uncertainty related to one’s destiny has also been explored by Soares (2005) in his analysis of the Malian prayer economy. He notes that many Malians give gifts to religious leaders as a means to assuring their place in the “next world.” The merit received for such alms is shrouded with uncertainty because “one never knows whether or how exactly one will benefit from such merit in this world or the next” (166).

³⁸ ‘Dua’ refers to a private appeal, a personal invocation, or a ‘calling upon’ God, and is a supplicatory prayer in Islam often performed at the end of salat, or ritual prayer. ‘Istikhara’ is a special prayer used by those who are uncertain or undecided and in need of divine guidance (Bowker 2003a; Esposito 2003b).

Conscious reflection on how to act, or not, has real effect on the direction one's scale may tip on Judgement Day. Although women try to act in ways that will tip the scale towards 'good', what is 'good' is contestable, and can change and evolve over time and over the life course. The 'good' may depend on situation or context, and sometimes women may fail when trying to act well. No matter the outcome though, the conscious reflection and deliberation signals a freedom; a freedom bound by culture and God. Through conscious reflection women have the freedom to act, or not, accordingly; yet women's freedom is bound by culture and God's will. Again, this suggests that destiny is a 'middle ground;' women's freedom to act and work on, through, and towards one's destiny is limited by culture and the will that God has created.

1.4 Ethics and morality

In anthropology, ethics and morality have become analytical tools for many³⁹, yet the place of ethics and morality in anthropology is still considered an emerging field. In 2002 Laidlaw wrote that there is "no sustained field of enquiry and debate" in anthropology on the study of ethics and morality. Moreover, he argues that there is "no connected history" about the study of morality in anthropology. What he means is that, at the time, there was no history of sustained debate on interpretative problems related to morality and ethics in anthropology. His article, for many, marks the 'moral turn' in an anthropology of ethics and morality; from which his call for analysis has been taken up by many.

Laidlaw does acknowledge that much ethnography engages in discussions of moral concepts and reasoning, and some have argued that theoretical reflection on ethics would further the discipline. In fact, early anthropological discussions (see Geertz 1984) on moral relativism and universalism are still fervently discussed today (see for example, D'Andrade 1995;; Scheper-Hughes 1995; Shweder 2003a, 2012). Yet, Laidlaw is calling for a deep engagement with moral philosophy, not just the category of the moral. He argues that a study of the moral has collapsed to a study of 'culture,' 'ideology,' and sometimes

³⁹ For more on universalism versus cultural relativism 'updated' see Shweder (2003a, 2012); piety and morality see Cook (2009), Hirschkind (2001, 2006), Laidlaw (2005), Mahmood (2001, 2012), Marsden (2005), Robbins (2004) and Schielke (2009a, 2009b); Fassin (2014) and Mattingly (2013, 2014b) for more on morality and health; and Lear (2006) for historical approaches to writing about ethics. See Fassin (2012), Keane (2014, 2017), Laidlaw (2002, 2013a, 2013b, 2016), MacIntyre (1990), and Robbins (2007a, 2009, 2015b, 2016) for more on theoretical perspectives to an anthropology of morality and ethics.

‘discourse’. In other words, the moral is used to explain collectively sanctioned rules, beliefs, and opinions; the concept of the moral comes to mean everything and nothing. As such, this thesis engages with aspects of moral philosophy, and it aims to separate culture from morality through its use of value ethics as an analytical tool to examine life course development.

Values, according to Weber, exist in thought and are expressed in action; action, in turn, orders the world so as to become comprehensible. However, simply claiming that values are ideas that motivate action does not address how values exist, or how they exist in a seeming semblance of harmony (i.e. not chaos). To address this, Ferrara (2008) identifies two kinds of forces in the world: the force of what exists, or the force of things; and the force of ‘what ought to be the case,’ or the force of ideas (1-2; see also Robbins 2015a). These forces align the ‘real’ and the ‘ideal’ through a middle ground, “the force of what is as it should be or the force of the example” (2008, 2-3). An example “is a realization of a value in the world” (Robbins 2015a, 20), and examples help avoid the difficulties of assigning values a purely ideal existence (ibid. 28). Thus, by locating values in existing examples that people encounter in their daily lives, and not in a model of culture that is imposed on society¹, this thesis takes values to be best understood in practice. In what follows I will describe several approaches to understanding value ethics and morality, and then I will contextualise how ethics is understood and used throughout this thesis.

The phrase “moral life”, according to Kleinman (2006) can be ambiguous. He argues that ‘moral’ can be used in two ways; in one instance it refers to values and in the other it refers to our sense of right and wrong. He suggests that when ‘moral’ refers to values it simply refers to the things that matter the most to us; however this meaning does not equate to ‘good’ in an ethical sense. Instead moral experience could be far from good, and the expression of values could be inhuman (like in the case of slavery). Thus, moral action could be viewed as ‘bad’ from the outside and permissible from the inside. This ambiguous understanding of morality is reminiscent of the debates on cultural relativism and universalism. Yet, Kleinman argues that what is moral ought to be understood as what is local, and the local needs to be understood to require ethical review, or what he describes as scrutiny from the outside and from the inside.

¹ Robbins identifies the ‘postmodern turn’ as the point in the discipline when notions of shared culture were viewed as “too deterministic,” and “too disrespectful” of the “complexity” and “individuality” of persons and their individual perspectives on the world (2015a, 20).

The second meaning of moral focuses on a sense of right and wrong; or ways of conducting life that are closely connected with the idea of ethics, or the aspiration of values that transcend the local and guide daily life (Kleinman 2006, 1-3). In other words, ethical life starts in the everyday and in the ordinary because ethical reflexivity is pervasive (Keane 2017).

Anthropological writings on ethics and morality do not define or use these terms consistently. In what follows I distinguish between several theories of ethics and describe in what ways this thesis builds on their explorations of the everyday. I also contextualise this thesis' ethnographic exploration of ethics and morality through two key concepts: reflexivity and social interaction.

Freedom

This thesis' emphasis on the reflexive nature of thought processes draws on Laidlaw's theory of ethics, where the possibility of human freedom is a central tenet. For Laidlaw (2014), the study of ethics does not necessarily presume that people are, by nature, good. Instead he argues that it is important to recognise that people are being evaluated, and evaluate themselves in light of notions of what is ethically good or right. Sometimes people fall short and may be seen by others as having failed, but this does not overshadow the presence of evaluation (3).

For Laidlaw deliberation, reflection, and critique are crucial elements to what it means to live an ethical life. He argues against the Durkheimian conflation of the moral as social, and against notions that moral rules and norms are relativist, and distinct only to the society in which they rest; both of which, according to Laidlaw, remove freedom of reflection from everyday life and instead promote a collectivist and exotic depiction of morality. He also argues that 'Us and Them' dualisms problematically suggest that non-Western peoples have a history (documented through Western objectification), while lacking a category of the self (a subjective "I"). He posits that spiritual practices of self-development are "I" orientated, and vital to thinking about how non-Western peoples develop a range of practices devoted to the cultivation of ethical selves.

According to Laidlaw (2002) insofar as people's conduct is shaped by attempts to make themselves a certain kind of person, a person that, on reflection, they think they ought to be, their conduct is ethical and free (meaning consciously reflected upon). If a person undertakes this process with reference to "ideals, values, models, practices, relationships, and institutions" then their conduct becomes the subject matter for an anthropology of ethics (Laidlaw 2002, 327).

Laidlaw (2002) argues that freedom differs from agency in that agency in the anthropological imagination has come to represent the effectiveness of action; particularly "its effectiveness in producing, reproducing, or changing the structures within which people act" (315). Agency locates actions that are important or powerful, and the questions of whether a person's choices are really their own is conflated with questions of their capacity for power in causal terms (Abu-Lughod 1990; Mahmood 2012). In other words, Laidlaw argues, "only actions contributing towards what the analyst sees as structurally significant count as instances of agency" (315).

Laidlaw takes the approach of virtue ethics, and argues against moral coherency integrated into a seamless tradition (more specifically, he argues against MacIntyre's notion of virtue ethics). Instead he draws on Bernard Williams, who writes that "values are intrinsically and perennially plural and conflicts between them are irreducible ... and therefore for ethical lives to consist in part at least of balancing conflicting claims and sometimes facing tragic choices is a normal and more or less unavoidable state of affairs" (Laidlaw 2014, 167; citing Williams 1981, 72). Laidlaw instead focuses on "techniques of self-formation," as practices that "permit individuals to effect" their own bodies, souls, thoughts, and conduct in order to transform and modify themselves, and to attain certain states (Foucault 1997, 177, 255; cited in Laidlaw 2014, 101). These processes of self-formation are found within one's culture, society, and social group (Foucault 1997, 291); yet for Laidlaw they do not mean that individuals forego active, reflective freedom in actualising them. This process is also complicated as individuals "may be part of several conflicting stories at the same time" (Laidlaw 2014, 82). Individuals may follow fragmented narratives, which they shift between, to form components of an informed ethical life.

Laidlaw's theory of ethics is compelling and has great influence on the theoretical approach this thesis takes; particularly its emphasis on reflective consciousness. Like Laidlaw I argue

that reflective consciousness is a precondition for ethical life (Laidlaw 2014, 177), and vital to processes of ethical self-cultivation, or how one *ought* to live. I locate ethical evaluations in the “interstices of everyday activity” (Keane 2014), thus mitigating the study of ethics from becoming a study of those whom the anthropologist approves.

The social

Taking a study of ethics as evaluative gives primacy to the experiences and perspectives of the first-person and self-interpreting subject. This commits the anthropologist to taking seriously people’s own best accounts of themselves, but like Keane (2014, 2017) I argue that the ethical is not only intimately personal and individual, it is also social in nature.

Keane (2017) draws on Bernard Williams who suggests that ethics concerns a manner of life as something that unfolds over the long term and is likely to vary according to one’s circumstances. Ethics is less about decisions and rules, and more about virtues. It is social and shared with others (Keane 2017, 17-18). Keane focuses on minute social exchanges that make up everyday life and reveal ethical reflexivity, specifically the interaction between the first and third person perspectives. He argues that such a perspective illuminates individual accountability for one’s actions and oneself. However, for Keane, reflexivity is not a necessary precondition for the ethical, yet “it can play a catalysing role in producing that public knowledge that feeds back into people’s unselfconscious responses to other people (2016, 25). This thesis builds on the notions of the first and third person perspective on ethical self formation, however it strays from Keane’s linguistic approach, and instead attempts to problematize the debates, discussions, and deliberations women encounter. It attempts to analyse evaluative moments as actions that can illuminate ethical cultivation and transformation within individuals and in society.

In taking a social approach to a study of ethical cultivation it is necessary to describe what is meant by first person and third person perspectives. I take Mattingly’s (2010, 2012, 2013, 2014b) notion of the first person as not only focused on the practices of moral subjectivation involved in cultivating virtues, but also in action, or the ‘doing’ of the everyday (2012, 179). As will become evident in the chapters that follow, everyday action involves practical judgement about how best to act in a world where the best good is difficult to discern and difficult to achieve. Thus, the first person approach to living an

ethical life is one where the individual is somehow responsible for their actions, while at the same time actions are sometimes out of one's control.

The first person is both an "I" and a "we," where the "I" is represented through women's first person phenomenological experiences (see Chapter 4 on the body), and the first person plural "we" represents communities that one belongs to (Somali women, Muslim, not-God, not-man). The third person is represented by the gaze of the world, particularly the gaze of men, God, and other women in the community.

Debate, discussion, and deliberation

This thesis also explores processes of ethical self-cultivation through the debates, discussions, and negotiations that make up moments of reflective consciousness of the kind of person one wants to be and the kind of life one wants to live. I analyse the values, ideals, practices, relationships and institutions that influence daily activity and women's intimate relationships. I follow Marsden (2009) by focusing on ethical and moral decision making as a conflictual process, where the potential for conflict becomes most evident in moments of change and transformation (Robbins 2004). It is through exploration of potential conflict that negotiations, debates, and discussions become key sites of "ethical consciousness" (Laidlaw 2013a).

The making of the ethical and moral decision as part of an ongoing and conflictual process has been explored by Marsden (2007a, 2007b) and Schielke (2009a, 2009b), and serves as a guiding influence for how I understand ethics as practice. Like Marsden and Schielke I acknowledge that the conflictual and contested nature of living an ethical life is at odds with understandings of Islam as a textually centred faith that provides a set of rules for believers to follow. In fact Keane argues that in such instances it becomes important to ask what circumstances tend to foster or induce the development of morality systems, a task which is taken up in Chapter 2. And, following the lead of scholars of the anthropology of Islam like Marsden, Schielke, and Elliot (2016) this thesis seeks to explore the thought processes through which Somali women make moral judgements, and to contribute to discussions about the interaction between Islamic text and lived experience.

Limitations

Not everything people do is undertaken as a moral action (Schielke 2009a, 2009b).

Individuals may at times act with ambivalence, or there may be moments in life when they may not 'know where they are going' and what they are 'working towards.' Instead they simply desire to act well⁴⁰ and balance the good and the bad. However, actions undertaken with reflective consciousness, or having chosen to act in a certain way, indicate moral action. A conscious choice of ambivalence does not mean one is amoral, lacking direction, or facing uncertainty, rather one has still consciously deliberated how to best act, again suggesting moral action. When a woman reflexively considers how she will act (or not), she is making a moral choice.

For Laidlaw the notion of reflexive consciousness indicates one's freedom to choose how to act, and he applies this framework to a critique of Mahmood's (2012) work with women in the Cairo mosque movement. Mahmood suggests that disciplining one's body through repeated and habituated actions creates an embodied disposition. Women in her study perform *salat* with the conscious intention of creating a pious disposition. Eventually, after habituated practice they come to embody a pious disposition without having to think about it. Laidlaw calls this an "ethical unconsciousness" (2013a). He eloquently argues that when women no longer think about the actions they perform, or participate in reflexive consciousness, then they are no longer cultivating an ethical disposition and a moral self.

Laidlaw explains such limits to freedom as "something constructed out of the role given to choice in various cultures and in various domains within specific cultures" (2002, 323).

Building on this Robbins suggests that culture⁴¹ has a primary role in moral life, where

⁴⁰ Often actions can be analysed as 'two sides of the same coin': innocent to some, harmful to others. For example, 'sinful' actions like chewing *qaat* or catcalling women may not be considered culturally and piously 'wrong' or 'harmful' by everyone. For example, there is a new order of Wahabi Islam that considers *qaat* to be forbidden, while many religious elders consider it permissible. This tension in 'correct' understanding and practice of Islam is explored more through women's sisterhoods in Chapter 5. Additionally, many friends explained that on Judgement Day a person's actions will be 'weighed'; if they have done more 'good' than 'bad' then they will go to Paradise. For example, Fowsia knows that chewing *qaat* is 'wrong' but she does it anyway. She can 'balance' (or purify) this 'wrong' by, for example, praying *salat* 5 times a day (see opening vignette) or fasting during Ramadan.

⁴¹ I take "culture" to be "a reality lit up by a morally enforceable conceptual scheme or subset of meanings instantiated in practice" (Shweder 2003b, 238).

culture “defines a space for freedom and choice” (2007a, 295)⁴². Thus Somali society creates women’s choices but limits women’s actions to the adherence of cultural norms understood as binding (ibid. 296)⁴³.

1.5 A theory of change

In analysing cultural and moral changes women undergo throughout the life course, much like Robbins (2004, 2007a, 2009), I locate a theory of value as central to the conception of culture. A theory of value can specify why cultures allow choice in particular domains or situations, and how such choices are felt to be moral ones by actors. This theory of culture and value allows for analysis of the nature of cultural change and to understand the role moral discourse has in situations of change.

Robbins argues that values determine the importance of elements of culture including beliefs, ideas, and things. Such cultural elements could also be understood as a morally enforceable conceptual scheme of beliefs, ideas and things that are instantiated in practice; meaning they are acted upon (Shweder 2003b). These elements are ordered according to a hierarchy of more or less valued elements, where the cultural elements at the top of a hierarchy encompass the ‘lesser’ valued elements of society (Robbins 2004).

In Robbins’ analysis of the Urapmin of Papua New Guinea he argues that in their recent conversion to charismatic Christianity they have come to see their daily lives as filled with important moral choices. After their conversion there was an unsettling of relations between the values that inform their daily lives, and it is in these moments of cultural change that value conflict occurs and new value hierarchies are created.

Robbins’ (2004) analysis of the Urapmin is both macro and micro; he can only understand the intricacies of daily life if it is contextualised in a larger framework. Thus he analyses pre-contact Urapmin life, and follows the transformation of their beliefs and ideas through colonial and missionary contact. This thesis similarly focuses on the macro and micro changes Somali women have undergone, although through a different lens. Where Robbins is concerned with the moment of contact and scaling moral change up to a

⁴² Robbins continues to propose a theory of value as central to conceptions of culture; see Chapter 7 for more.

⁴³ Placing virtue as the object of analysis illuminates a theory of cultural change, including changes in morality.

historical perspective and down to the daily life, I am concerned with changes over the life course.

The macro lens affords contextualisation of daily life and its influences (the internet, TV, family abroad, friends, and religion) into a wider frame of historical and political changes. The micro lens illuminates moments of contestation, deliberation, and discussion over the life course; thus bringing values and value hierarchies to the fore of analysis.

Robbins' describes three models of cultural change: the model of assimilation, the model of transformation, and the model of adoption. In the model of assimilation individuals "fit new circumstances into old categories" thus expanding the range of referents to which they can be applied, but the relationships between categories do not change. The model of transformation refers to efforts to bring traditional categories into relation with the world, thus transforming the relationship between categories. Finally, in the model of adoption individuals take on something new without prejudging what happens to what was there before (2004, 10-11).

In relating these models of change to a theory of value, Robbins draws on Dumont (1986) to argue that values are a part of culture and a culture's values are expressed in the way that culture is organised. Thus, a theory of cultural change includes not only the ways categories are transformed but the ways values are as well. When values at the top of a value hierarchy, or paramount values, are replaced or come to exist alongside an old one, then change occurs and the relations between values are transformed. "Values are determinations of the relative importance of elements of culture (beliefs, ideas, things, etc.) and as such always serve to produce hierarchies of more or less valued elements. The ways elements are arranged in such hierarchies that can be further specified through the idea that the more valued term of a pair encompasses its contrary," or lesser valued elements of society (Robbins 2004, 296-297, drawing on Dumont).

Thus, for Somalilander women the categories are key life phases defined by women's intimate relationships and what they believe to be their destiny: love, marriage, and children. Within these categories, I argue, that the values women hold are at times contested and in conflict. The struggle between values is not only of the demands that values make on everyday practice, but also of those they make on thought. Values require

individuals to work out, as fully as possible, the logics of the domains of life to which they apply and, if need be, at the expense of lesser ranked value spheres.

Value spheres, according to Weber (1986), are aspects of culture divided into an economic sphere, a political sphere, an aesthetic sphere, an erotic sphere, and an intellectual sphere. Thus, for Weber, culture possesses a number of different value spheres and they are governed by different laws; creating relationships of contradiction between value spheres. Dumont draws on the construal of values as things that are able to organise elements of culture, however he differs from Weber in his argument that there can be a paramount value that orders society. Thus the Weberian model presupposes constant conflict, and the Dumontian model presupposes harmony, it is by appreciating value conflict that ethical matters of choice and freedom become available. When there is conflict between values reflexive choice is demanded of individuals, and they become consciously aware of choosing their own fates or destinies (Robbins 2004, 11-12; 2007a, 298-300).

I take Robbins' approach of exploring potential value conflict to explore the reflexive choices women make throughout the life course and towards what they believe to be their destiny. I argue that the values of love, romance, piety, spirituality⁴⁴, and materialism are not necessarily 'new' values, rather women today understand and practice, or enact them, differently than before. I do not argue that moral and cultural change for Somali women is of any particular model- assimilation, transformation, or adoption- rather the model of change depends on the particular phase of the life course, the choices a woman must make, and external influences. This is not to suggest there is no sense of moral cohesion in society, instead there are many, at times competing, value spheres that inform any single choice and at other times there is a clear value hierarchy. It is also to suggest that in the macro analysis of wider historical and political change, Somali women are in the process of changing the categories and practices that structure their lives.

⁴⁴ There is no appropriate Somali translation of 'spirituality,' and when asked to translate informants used the words '*cibbaado*,' '*dhowrsanaan*,' '*tuudis*,' and '*baryo Alle*;' words they also used to translate and describe piety. The words for spirit include '*ruux*,' '*cibaado*,' and '*rooxaniyad*;' and refer to the spirits diviners (amongst others) communicate with. Here I use 'spirituality' in reference to the value of creating one-ness and unity with God. To be spiritual is a virtue and means to be in a dialectical relationship, or unity, with God whereas piety refers to more textually informed forms of Islam. Spirituality, as defined here, is more of a feeling, and a belief and trust in God's omnipotence.

1.6 Entanglement updated

Speaking in an interview in 2003, Achille Mbembe says that the ‘post’ in ‘postcolony’ does not refer to the idea of a transition from one form to another, or a sense of duration. Rather the ‘postcolony’ refers to “a timescape which is simultaneously in the process of being formed and of being dissolved through a movement that brings both the ‘being formed’ and the ‘being dissolved’ into collision” (Höller 2003). The term considers the intrinsic qualities and power of the contemporary while locating this present in a “concatenation” of multiple temporalities; thus according to Mbembe, Africa “is evolving in multiple and overlapping directions simultaneously” (ibid.). Mbembe’s model of entanglement presents an image of multiple temporalities overlapping and superseding each other, sometimes inside each other, in a non-linear fashion.

Mbembe (2001) argues that social science research on⁴⁵ Africa appears “in social theory only as a sign of lack,” and academic discourse has become a “quest for the causes of that lack.” He continues, that Africa is held “incomprehensible, pathological, and abnormal” on the basis of “a grotesque dramatization” of the political imagination. War is considered “all-pervasive,” the continent is seen as “powerless” and “engaged in rampant self-destruction,” and, human action is viewed as “stupid and mad,” “anything but rational calculation” (8). Although it is perhaps easy to reject Mbembe’s analysis as outdated, and to consider the social sciences as newly enlightened; there remains truth to his words. A quick search for news articles on Somalia⁴⁶ will reveal stories echoing Mbembe’s critique: “Somali pirates are back. Only a strong state can put an end to their activities” (Craze 2017); “Somalia Islamist insurgency splits as loyalty of key commander wavers” (Omar 2017); “Somalia: mortars targeted Somalia’s presidential palace” (Garowe Online 2017). Headlines and new stories such as these pervade our anthropological imagination of what Somalia *is*.

Like Mbembe, I am not blind to the “distress” and realities of daily life, but this thesis takes up Mbembe’s critique that “what is missing....is any sign of radical questioning.” In so doing this thesis asks *how can Somali women negotiate multiple temporalities, selves, and moralities while moving through the life course and working towards their destiny? How do*

⁴⁵ He emphasises ‘on’ citing a lack of fieldwork, especially in politics and development, and a lack of knowledge of local languages, which he argues are vital to any theoretical and philosophical understanding. See also Rettova (2017).

⁴⁶ Here I use Somalia instead of Somaliland because in much of the international community they are one and the same. I will discuss this further in Chapter 2.

women learn the skills and abilities needed to live an ethical life in a world of sometimes competing and conflicting values? In response to such questions, Mbembe warns that Africa as a concept has been collapsed into a single world where “fluctuations and tremblings,” “about-turns and disguises,” “silences and murmurings” have all become one. He calls for a greater reflection of “time as lived, not synchronically or diachronically, but in its multiplicity of simultaneities, its presence and absences, beyond the lazy categories of permanence and change” (Mbembe 2001, 8). Responding to Mbembe’s call for radical questioning, this thesis explores women’s conscious deliberations into what it means to live an ethical life. By focusing on value ethics this thesis not only considers change, but also transformation; over time and in the self. As will become evident, the process of transformation is not necessarily linear, it is complex and simultaneous.

I seek to update and build on Mbembe’s theory of entanglement by rethinking moral development over the life course to include Somali women’s experiences of life’s “complex order, rich in unexpected turns, which meanders, and changes of course”; to show “the torment of nonfulfillment and incompleteness” as well as processes of self-cultivation, and personal success; to show how “fluctuations and indeterminacy do not necessarily amount to lack of order” (Mbembe 2001, 8) and to illuminate the ways that women regain order by working on and towards what they believe to be their destiny. He writes that “we now feel we know nearly everything that African states, societies, and economies *are not*, we still know absolutely nothing about *what they actually are*” (ibid.); here I present a counter narrative, a counter to what Somali women *are not*: simply victims or resisters of patriarchy and Islam. Instead they engage in conscious reflection of how best to act; they negotiate, deliberate, debate, and discuss how to live an ethical life. Ultimately it is a project that describes the complex substances of daily life.

I argue that the life course is an entanglement of time, selves, and moralities; all of which women must negotiate and balance in the everyday. Time is an entanglement because although women move through the life course with a sense of forward motion, they are actually living in a timescape where “being formed” and “being dissolved” come into collision. For example, in Chapter 6 I show that when women enter into a joint narrative with the divine, either through divination or recitation of the *dua istikhara*, they enter a process of simultaneously “being formed” by creating a hopeful future and “being dissolved” by re-creating the past towards that future. Phenomenologically this joint

conversation with the divine has a sense of a beginning, middle, and end; yet life is comprised of multiple, overlapping movements. In other words, the reason a woman may turn to the divine for guidance through a joint narrative may be to engage with just one of many threads that form her life. She may ask for guidance in deciding which man to marry, indicating one thread of movement; and at the same time she may also be preparing for her exams, caring for her niece while her sister is sick, and applying for a job. These threads of her life move according to multiple temporalities, different “fluctuations and tremblings” (Mbembe 2001), and together they create an entangled sense of time, self and moralities. She presents many selves (daughter, student, careerist, potential wife), and must decide how best to act in each situation, while moving through a multiplicity of simultaneities.

In order to simplify and clarify the complexity of entanglement I build on Shweder’s (2003b) analysis of Oriya Hindu women’s life course, which he suggests moves across three dimensions: outward, upward, and through time. He argues that a woman’s life moves outward because with time a new daughter in law is no longer confined to the kitchen, and as she has children who can take on household responsibilities she gains more freedom to move outside of the home to conduct her prayer rituals. As a woman’s life moves outward it also moves upward towards the divine because she is now more able to perform her prayer rituals and deepen her spirituality. She does both of these through time, and over the life course (Shweder 2003b, 274).

Shweder’s analytical use of dimensions shows Oriya women move outward, upward and across time simultaneously. I draw on this analytical tool to reveal the individual threads that make up the simultaneous “fluctuations and tremblings,” “about-turns and disguises,” and “silences and murmurings” of life (Mbembe 2001). Thus, I propose a model of the life course that allows for the complexity that Mbembe identifies, including an extension of spiritual time to include the life of the other world (and in this case Islamic destiny). I argue for a life course model of five simultaneous movements: inward, outward, upward, forward and backward, all through the dimension of time. Women move inward and outward as part of the process of ethical self-cultivation that is predicated on a first person subjective “I” and the third person gaze of the world (including God). Women simultaneously move

upward⁴⁷ because the process of ethical self-cultivation not only includes the gaze of God (*al-Wahda*), but the process of knowing oneself is a means of knowing God. In other words it is only when one knows oneself that they can know God, they can trust God, and they can identify his signs, symbols, and feelings of guidance. Finally, life moves forward and backward in time as women act in the present, re-create the past, and dream of a future where they can do more, be more, and have more than they do now.

1.7 Thesis Outline

In this thesis I show Somali women's moral development and transformation over the life course. I do this by analysing women's intimate relationships, specifically the relationship they have with their bodies, the sisterhoods created with other women, the intimate relationship with the divine, and the relationship that women have with their husbands. These intimate relationships provide a narrative arc to many Somali women's lives: the ways in which they prepare and modify their bodies to become desirable and ready for marriage; the values they learn from other women and the support they cultivate before and during marriage; the relationship with the divine in moments of crisis or uncertainty leading to marriage or during marriage; and the moment in which marriage and family are near or actualised. However, as women move through the life course in the Somali Islamic context, there is not necessarily a clear beginning and end, nor does the life course always have forward movement or an uncomplicated narrative arc. I re-examine moral development and life course transformation through new understandings of the cultivation of values according to young, urban women's ideas and enactments of what it means to be modern in Hargeisa, Somaliland.

I deploy a theory of cultural change over the life course to show that during life course transition moments of value conflict come to view, and it is in these moments that we can analyse value hierarchy, creative solutions to value conflict, and new enactments of value. This thesis is comprised of four main ethnographic chapters that describe key phases of the 'life course', including: (4) the intimate relationship women have with their bodies, particularly working on and disciplining the body; (5) cultivation of sisterhood and female

⁴⁷ This seems to suggest that the divine is located in the sky, however the divine is heavenly located and gazes down seeing and knowing everything; "It is believed that God stays above us, in the sky and beyond" (personal communication with Idiris Mohamoud Abdi, July 21, 2017). 'Upwards' becomes a rhetorical tool to indicate a movement in space and over time towards the heavenly located divine.

community; (6) relationship with the divine, and crisis/uncertainty; and (7) the moment of marriage and family.

Chapter 2: Somaliland and the anthropological imagination

2.1 Introduction

Responding to Keane's emphasis on the importance of asking what circumstances tend to foster or induce the development of morality systems, this chapter seeks to briefly undertake a politico-historical contextualisation of Somaliland. In what follows I introduce key ideological and political collisions in the history of Somaliland and the making of contemporary gender relations; where history refers to a timescape in which identity and the institutions that form it are simultaneously in the process of being formed and being dissolved. More specifically, the 'becoming' and 'making' of Somaliland involves the collision of a multiplicity of selves: the religious, ethnic, nationalist, clannist, and modern; the chapter traces some of these collisions, and illuminates a concatenation of events that influence the ways women experience an entanglement of time, selves, and moralities.

2.2 Why Somaliland?

I begin by describing what Somaliland *is*, rather than *is not*. It *is* a self-declared independent territory whose origins lie in the civil war that led to the collapse of the Somali state (Bradbury 2008). It *is* considered a "mature" multi-clan and multi-party democratic state (Lewis 2008). And, it *is* "an island of stability in a sea of chaos; a democracy surrounded by authoritarian regimes; a real nation forged in spite of civil war, clan divisions, and religious tensions" (Allison 2015a). The relative peace and stability now afforded to Somaliland stems from a complex history predicated on the collision of ideas and ideologies. In what follows I briefly describe the 'making' of Somaliland and how these events comprise the circumstances that have influenced the development of moral systems⁴⁸ in which this thesis is located.

2.3 Pastoral Somalia

Prior to colonization, the Somali speaking peoples shared a sense of common cultural identity and lived in a stateless society. Arab and Asian traders had long introduced

⁴⁸ I do not use 'system' here to refer to a fixed totalitarian system of morals, instead this thesis argues that moral boundaries are fluid and continually being shaped and reshaped through discussion and debate.

Somalis to “world religion” and “regional trade networks” (Bradbury 24, 2008). Influenced by economic trade and Islam, the pastoral mode of production had a key influence on modes of survival, way of life, and gender roles and responsibilities for the northern Somalis. In the pastoral setting every person had a clear set of rights and responsibilities within their immediate family, and according to the clan mosaic (age, sex, social standing) (Warsame 2002). Both men and women engaged in extensive physical labour as part of the search for pasture and water (Abdi 2007; Kapteijns 1995; Kapteijns and Ali 1999). Women played a significant role in daily life; constructing and dismantling the *aqal* (house, hut), making grass mats for bedding and covering homes, tending to livestock, caring for children, and other matters of the home (Abdi 2007, Warsame 2002). Women tended to and looked after smaller stock like goats and sheep, and they prepared and processed the food staples like milk, ghee and meat⁴⁹. Women had a strong, and respected economic role in the pastoralist way of life; there was no specific breadwinner as every family member contributed to the survival of the family unit and shared resources. However, women had no rights to livestock ownership, yet they did have full use of rights over food staples.

Women’s economic rights were ensured as long as they were married, but if a couple divorced the woman faced economic vulnerability⁵⁰. During marriage men were regarded as the legal owners of the means of production, namely livestock; thus, customary laws, *xeer*⁵¹, were based on this legal understanding. However, in cases of divorce women were rarely paid the number of livestock stipulated in the marriage contract and few women had alternative options, including access to cash (Warsame 2002)⁵².

During this time men and women also followed a “relaxed interpretation” of Islam (Samatar 2005). There was no tradition of confining women to the home⁵³, nor gender segregation. The pastoral way of life required that all members of the family unit contribute their share of labour needed for survival. A small urban majority, belonging to the middle and upper class practiced seclusion of women (Abdi 2007; Kapteijns 1995), while widows, divorcees, and very poor women worked outside the home as traders

⁴⁹ Some have suggested that this division of labour was “patriarchal” but retained “relatively open cultural norms” (Kapteijns 1999).

⁵⁰ See Appendix A for a *sitaat* song expressing women’s uncertain future after they are sent away from their matrimonial home after divorce.

⁵¹ Also, rule, regulation, constitution, traditional law.

⁵² For more on *meher* payment see Chapter 7.

⁵³ Except during the last month of pregnancy and 40 days after the birth of a child (Samatar 2005).

(although the overall number of women working as traders and market vendors remained low)⁵⁴ (Warsame 2002).

Men and women did follow norms of gender segregation when it came to religion and politics⁵⁵, as remains the case today. Men held influence in religious matters, including scholarship and ceremonies. Although women were not forbidden from studying Islam, they were not encouraged to do so. Instead their knowledge of Islam was learnt from their mothers, and once married, from their husbands. Additionally, they were not allowed in certain public spaces, including the council of elders, and could not conduct religious ceremonies (Samatar 2005).

Although there were clear religious and political demarcations for men and women, women were allowed to partake in public ceremonial dances with men. Men, however, were fully excluded from the women's world. Men who joined women's gatherings were called "*dumar shaneyeh*" (Samatar 2005, 230), or "the man who always stays with women," which was (and still is) considered shameful. Fearing this label men avoided women's spaces and if a man did intrude in their domain, the council of elders intervened on behalf of the women.

2.4 Colonial clash

Gender relations, shared cultural identity, the 'relaxed' practice of Islam, and education changed during colonialism (1887-1960), often in ways that created tension or contradiction in women's lives. Additionally, economic and political systems evolved to "integrate" the Somali people into an international political system predicated on the concept of the nation-state; thus, if an "embryonic Somali nation did exist prior to European colonisation, then one consequence of colonial engagement was to divide it" (Bradbury 24, 2008).

⁵⁴ Hange (1988) argues that women may have had a stronger position and role in society during the precolonial era than they enjoy today. He bases his analysis on Somali folk stories, where women are principal characters and there is evidence of clans bearing the name of their ancestral mothers.

⁵⁵ For more on women's role in politics and peace building see Abdi 2007; Abdulkadir and Ackley 2014; Affi 2014; Africa Watch Committee 1990; Ahmed 1999; Besteman 1996; Gardner and El-Bushra 2004; Hammond 2013; Ingiriis 2015; Kapteijns 1995, 2013; Rayale, Pomfret, and Wright 2015; Walls, Schueller, Ekman 2017; Warsame 2002.

The colonial encounter started with the 1885 Berlin Conference, where European colonial powers began partitioning the Somali speaking region, and in 1897 it became divided between four colonial powers in five countries. The UK claimed the Protectorate of British Somaliland (since 1991, the self-declared Somaliland), and the Northern Frontier District (since 1963, the North-Eastern Province in Kenya). Italy claimed *La Somalia Italiana* (now Somalia), France *La Côte Française des Somalis* (since 1977, Djibouti), and Abyssinia (Ethiopia), the Ogaden and Haud areas (Lewis 1980, 55-71). This division of the Somali speaking territories according to the ideology of the nation-state affected the 'kind of' colonial state that emerged in Somaliland, and in turn the trajectory of the civil war in the 1980s and 90s, and finally the influence of the British on current 'make-up' of Somaliland.

The British and Italian colonial administrations ruled the Somalis as clans and sub-clans, with sub-clans eventually competing "with each other through and for the state" (Kapteijns 2013, 76). In the first decades of the Protectorate the British signed friendship and protection agreements with clan 'representatives' signalling that British administrators viewed Somalis principally according to their clan. Eventually administrators undertook ethnographic and geographic surveys of the land which led to the demarcation of clan domain (Rader 2016, 92). Thus, clan identity became politicised in new ways, particularly with recourse to regulation as a means of control, and notably through 'friendly' clans becoming armed by the British to alter the balance of power between some clans and the state's allocation of rights to pasture and water. The state's allocation of resources through lineage only sought to reinforce communal identity and territorial exclusivity (Bradbury 28, 2008). In turn, the colonial construct of clan became, according to Kapteijns, a technology of power, "a political instrument in the hands of the colonial administrators and their Somali subjects alike" (Kapteijns 2013, 76).

Although the British facilitated strong clan divisions, territorially and through the allocation of resources, they simultaneously reinforced indigenous political institutions (namely *xeer*) that are thought to have proved vital to the ability of the people of Somaliland to recreate a unity after the civil war (Bradbury 29, 2008). Thus, as people were being divided according to perceived ideas of clan, they were simultaneously finding cohesion through the maintenance and legitimacy of indigenous political institutions. These institutions have a long standing position as vital arbitrators in Somaliland daily life, including marriage practices and gender relations.

For example, before Islam came to the Horn of Africa *xeer* was the primary rule of law. These laws were not written, but they were detailed and respected by people. After the Somali people embraced Islam, Islamic law was introduced and blended with *xeer*⁵⁶. Then, during British colonial rule some aspects of the Indian Penal Code were introduced. Today, Islamic law and *xeer* function with little distinction; although a judge may be aware of the position on Islam on specific issues, they may defer to elders to deal with a specific issue through the *xeer*. *Xeer* and Islamic law influence women's standing in the custody of children after divorce, ownership of property, women's work outside the home, family maintenance, marriage, divorce, and polygamy. Although women's rights are changing in each of these aspects of marriage and family life (towards what feminist writers would consider 'more' rights), the influence of revivalist Islam is trending towards more literalist readings of Islamic law. This new reading of Islamic law is legitimated by growing acceptance of more conservative understandings of Islam.

In addition to the British influence on clan ideology and the political systems, colonial rule also influenced the economic situation of the territory; particularly through their reluctance to invest in the territory and the resulting development of a mixed economy (Bradbury 2008, 24). This mixed economy primarily consisted of livestock production and export, as well as a small rain-fed agricultural sector run by salaried officials and civil servants (ibid. 29). Not only did this change the use of land (from a more pastoralist form of livestock subsistence) it also led to a market based economy⁵⁷, and in turn affected gender relations.

As the use and control of small livestock was commoditized and women lost control of smaller ruminants the division of labour in rural areas drastically changed. These livestock became the British colony's chief export commodity and men were the primary organisers of marketing and selling the animals. The money made from sales technically belonged to the household; however men took full control of its distribution. This change in small livestock commercialization altered women's access to and control over this key resource, as well as husbands' economic power over women and children (Samatar 2005, 232).

This economic transformation led to a change in gender relations, specifically a "new family type" and "new household relations" (Samatar 2005, 232). Men who emerged as the new

⁵⁶ For more on the mutual reinforcement of Islamic law and *xeer* see Abdulkadir and Ackley (2014).

⁵⁷ It also led to the exploitation of rangelands giving rise to fears of environmental degradation (in the 1930s) and drought that remain today (Bradbury 2008, 30). This is a narrative echoed across anglophone and francophone Africa wherever extensive mobile pastoralism is practiced.

upper and middle class sought wives who would be housewives, women who could enjoy the luxury of domestic life that did not include participation in manual labour. This not only afforded men a new status, but it also gave women a new and enviable class distinction. In parallel the commodification and transformation of economic and social life from agropastoralism to urban, market based activities led to “housewivization” of upper-middleclass women, yet also facilitated new opportunities for poorer urban women to enter the economic market.

Additionally, upper and middle class men who had livestock in the rural areas sought second wives to tend to their housing property, signalling newfound wealth and prestige in land and home ownership, not just in livestock commodities. As a result of the new class system, women became more confined to the home than previously. If a husband was wealthy enough then domestic help was hired (often rural relatives), potentially relieving a woman of many of her domestic duties. Where familial wealth did not allow for the family to uphold this middleclass ideal, then urban women became market traders, and rural women reared livestock. This transformation represents two potential ideals which persist in women’s social life today; elite women who are relieved of domestic duty, and women who earn their own capital whether through business or livestock.

This change in economic output aided in the development of a new mercantile and urban-based governing class who acted as bureaucrats, civil servants, and powerful traders, which led to the creation of new economic relationships between pastoralists, merchants, and the state. Thus, a previously politically egalitarian society became divided, promoting a small educated class of higher economic status (Bradbury 2008, 24-31); and such divisions remain today, but they have become complicated by the influx of “part-time” (Hammond 2015) and returning diaspora. These divisions also locate the values of materialism (rooted in economic class division) and intelligence (through formal education) as products influenced by the colonial encounter.

According to Samatar (2005, 232), during the colonial era Islam was also redefined, as social differentiation unravelled, specifically in regard to class. As more women entered the market as traders, and began to control their income, religion was used to justify dissent aimed at removing women from men’s spheres of influence. Additionally,

appropriate conceptions of dress began to evolve⁵⁸ with married women covering their hair and urban women adopting the *abaya* (loose, ankle length black robe or dress), *shalmad* (large shawl), and *googarad* (underskirt). Some women also adopted the *hijab*. This urban way of dressing became the norm for women starting at puberty, typically around age 14. Women in the rural areas were (and still are) less likely to adopt the *abaya* due to its restrictiveness and the demands of work. Thus, dress was and still is a signifier of women's involvement in productive labour, not just a reflection of Islamic piety or values⁵⁹ (Samatar 2005, 233).

Although there is a distinct divide in economic organization, hierarchical structure, and gender ideology between urban and rural women, lack of access to education was one aspect that affected all women whether rural or urban, middle class or poor. Women's lack of Quranic and secular education prohibited their economic and social mobility. Quranic schools were primarily accessible to a small number of boys and young men in pastoral communities. Some young men who attended these schools trained to become religious authorities, leaving young girls with no formal role in Islamic study, teaching, or leadership. At the same time colonial, secular education was introduced although, according to Samatar (2005, 234) the Somali community was suspicious of the 'real' agenda behind this program and there was tension between the Somalis who supported secular education and religious leaders who opposed it⁶⁰. For example, in 1971 when Latin script was introduced to the newly formed Somali Republic many argued that it was a colonial strategy to introduce Christianity; a suspicion around language that persists today.

The confluence of the practice of Islam and access to education during British rule created a new "commercialization of social life" and reinforced patriarchal systems through the interpretation of Sharia law. For example, the state passed laws codifying structures of

⁵⁸ And, continued to evolve during the post-colonial period Barre Regime in the 1970s and 1980s during the Muslim Brotherhood's influence in Somali urban centres (Abdi 2007).

⁵⁹ See Chapter 4 for more on women's dress or armour in the urban setting.

⁶⁰ This tension remains today and has resulted in many independent schools and universities that follow what some might consider polarised ideologies; "secular" or "religious". Although the disparity between secular and religious ideology in education is contested, there are political agendas underpinning the educational system. For example, many institutions deemed "religious" are funded by the Kuwaiti or Turkish governments. In contrast "secular" institutions are often backed by American, British, and Canadian individuals (including Somali diaspora). This dichotomy between religious and secular is fluid and contestable; however the prioritisation of primary language of instruction (Arabic or English) is most often the means through which an institution is considered religious or secular. There are some institutions which strike a balance and are considered to have firm grounding in both religion and secular knowledge.

male dominance like property ownership, and divorce procedures that adhered to colonial interpretation of Sharia Law; while simultaneously furthering opportunities for girl's education by opening girls schools (Samatar 2005, 231).

More specifically, in 1951 a British colonial officer and his Somali assistant came to the town of Gabiley to convince village elders to establish a primary school. Elders believed it was a Christian "ploy" (Samatar 2005, 235), but despite local resistance the school was built in 1953. It was decided as a compromise that boys be educated in Islam and able to read the Quran before being able to enrol in secular schools. In turn the number of Quranic schools increased. However, due to the "patriarchal prohibitions imposed on women" (ibid.), they did not attain the Quranic knowledge required to enrol in secular schools. Over time a few girls' schools were established, first in Burco then in Hargeisa, but girls were not taught science and maths, instead they were prepared to be housewives for the Somali elite (ibid.). Nevertheless, a few women became nurses, school principals, and government clerks, yet most left the workforce once they got married. However, by the 1960s numerous schools for girls had opened and some girls attended intermediate schools that were previously boys-only.

In Gabiley, in the 1960s⁶¹ a co-educational university was established and eventually a co-educational Quranic school opened giving girls the chance to learn the prerequisites for attending school, signalling the potential "opening up" of strict gendered access to education (although within schools and universities gender segregation persists; whether in separate schools for boys and girls, or informal gendered segregation in the university classroom). As the school was looking for teachers, a Somali-Ethiopian border family settled in Gabiley, with Sheikh Ismail becoming the religious education teacher. This is important because his wife, Sheikh Marian Sheikh Ismail helped establish a *sitaat* centre with other women in the village, providing the only public space where women could gather and undertake an Islamic education. The women who attended *sitaat* sang religious songs and addressed collective concerns. Sheikh Marian was the only woman amongst the founders with an Islamic education, thus she led prayers and preached at the centre. She also taught Islamic history and the Quran to women, running her own Quranic school for

⁶¹ After colonialism the new Republic passed a referendum that allowed women to be artists and to sing in theatres, and many women participated in sports; many male poets denounced the "modernisation process" and the new freedoms afforded to women (Ingiriis 2015).

women (Samatar 2005, 236-7). The women I met in Gabiley spoke fondly of Sheikh Marian and were grateful for her teachings.

Two educational spaces, previously off-limits to girls and women, became accessible with the advent of secular education opportunities and a female-led demand for Quranic education. Quranic knowledge as a prerequisite for secular education suggests that “Islam and secularism mutually reinforced each other’s growth,” contemporaneously breaking down the binary between tradition and modernity (*casriyee*) (Samatar 2005, 237). While this may have been true at the time, today this binary re-emerges as a political undercurrent in the educational system. Additionally, generational understanding and practice of ‘new’ and ‘old’ Islam suggest a binary between ‘correct’ and ‘traditional’ Islam (Masquelier 2008).

As urban centres enjoyed access to formal schooling, its absence in the majority pastoral population meant that new political parties were formed and represented by the new elite classes: merchants, military officers, civil servants, religious leaders, and Somalis living abroad. Together this educated elite became advocates of a ‘modern,’ ‘progressive’ agenda that included support for formal education and women’s rights (see Kapteijns 1999, 101, and Chapter 5 for more). Many of the new political parties led by the educated elite considered clannism a factor that limited creation of a national movement towards an independent, unified and Greater Somalia (Bradbury 2008, 31). They advocated for a common Somali and Islamic identity, or *Soomaalinimo* (a national Somali communal identity), and denounced clan identity (Liberatore 2013). However, the different colonial “administrative systems, police forces, taxes, currencies, and education systems” (Liberatore 2013), as well as languages (Italian, English, French) and legal traditions (British common law, Italian law, Islamic *Shari’a*, and *xeer*) meant that unification would not be an easy task. It becomes evident that on the one hand Somali society was ‘progressing’ towards the values and products⁶² of a post-colonial, ‘modern’ nation-state, and on the other hand society was further dissolving into clan-based, economic, and educational divisions; resulting in significant unravelling of the regional social fabric.

⁶² I say ‘products’ referring to the colonial legacy of capitalist ideology and systems.

2.5 Legacy of the Barre regime

In the late 1950s, independence movements gathered momentum and the British colonial authorities agreed to grant the Protectorate independence. In July 1960 Somalia and Somaliland merged to form the new Somali Republic, with Mogadishu as its capital. Democratically-elected governments in the newly unified Republic succeeded each other after scheduled elections in 1964 and 1969. The Republic had a flourishing parliamentary system along with opposition parties; however the political parties engaged their constituencies, just as the British and Italians had, through clan (Africa Watch 1990, 14). The political parties mobilised support and power through their clan constituencies and the constituencies looked to the political party for jobs, scholarships and other benefits (Kapteijns 2013, 76). Additionally the new Socialist Revolutionary Council (SRC) emphasised policies that supported the values of collectivisation, urbanisation and modernisation, as well as an ideological 'citizen comrade;' thus illuminating the collision of clan division and nationalistic unity.

In March 1969, the second general election was organised with parties accusing each other of fraud and election-rigging. There were also rumours that some parties had weapons, making the unsettled situation dangerous; and then on 15th October, serving President Shermarke was assassinated by a policeman. The killing was not politically motivated; however it intensified an already unstable situation and political atmosphere (Africa Watch 1990, 14). Following this there was a bloodless-coup in which Major General Mohamed Siad Barre, the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, assumed power. The Supreme Revolutionary Council, of which Barre was the chairman, took over all executive, judicial, and legislative powers.

The coup was initially welcomed in Somalia because it alleviated the political and social tensions that had been building since the campaign for 1969 elections had begun. It was thought that the coup saved the country from a mounting crisis, which would have plunged the country into chaos and violence. Aware of the relief that welcomed the coup, the Barre government began an ambitious campaign of sweeping legal reforms and implementing extensive political decisions and social programs (Africa Watch 1990, 16).

After the colonial period, and through the Barre regime, clan continued to be a powerful political instrument that mediated the relationships between the government and subjects, as well as among subjects themselves. For example, collective punishment of the whole

clan group for political and criminal offenses of a few persisted from the colonial period and through the Barre regime as a dimension of “clan-as-a-governmental-technology” (Kapteijns 2013, 76-80).

Although Barre utilised clan ideology as a technology for his own power and gain, his party, the SRC, promoted a programme of Scientific Socialism in 1970 (Lewis 2008, 39). This concatenation of devisive clan rule with nationalist policy led to both benefit and harm for the Somali people. On the one hand the SRC embarked on a programme of reforms that included fighting poverty, disease, and ignorance (Lewis 2008, 36). They promoted social justice, literacy, and women’s rights (see Chapter 4 for more). Women became senior public officials and served in local councils. Opportunities for secondary and higher education increased, and the military offered women academic and military scholarships abroad. However, the new affordances offered to women were under the auspices of Barre’s political motivation. Women’s changing status became a tool for legitimating his regime; creating a global reputation and consolidating power through women’s organizations (Ingiriis 2015, 387).

As girls gained access to Quranic and state educational opportunities in postcolonial Somaliland, the first wave of female Somali university graduates returned after completing degrees in Europe and America. These women, and other female leaders, reported feeling neglected from leadership and decision-making spaces; leading to debate in mosques and markets about women’s opportunities post-independence. For example, Faduma Ahmed Alim, the first Somali woman to complete a university degree in Italy in 1962, reported that little consideration was given to highly-educated and returned female graduates (Ingiriis 2015). Faduma Alim’s mother wrote a *baraanbur*⁶³ in protest of government treatment of qualified and educated women, which resulted in Alim’s appointment as Director of Women’s Section at the Ministry of Education, and School Inspector.

In 1975 Barre’s government passed a new Family Law that gave men and women equal rights in divorce and inheritance, *diya* payments⁶⁴, and certain aspects of *xeer*. This was considered an attack on ‘traditionalism’ and a promotion of a new ‘modern’ society. In February and March of 1971 they instituted a “Campaign against Tribalism,” called *ololeh*,

⁶³ See Appendix B for a *buraanbur* (women’s poetry) written by Faduma Alim’s mother on women’s treatment despite their educational success.

⁶⁴ Also known as blood money.

that was designed to “exorcize corruption and to resuscitate pan-Somalism and national unity” (Samatar 1988, 107).

The era also emphasised a collective “Muslimness” as a means to overcome, what Kapteijns (2009, 2013) calls, “a lapse in morality.” In 1972 Barre declared that “ours is the religion of common man. It stands for equality and justice. Consequently, socialism as applied to our particular condition cannot identify religion as the obstacle to the progress of the working class and therefore cannot negate it” (Samatar 1988, 108). Yet, in the introduction of Family Law, Barre conflictingly introduced sanctions on religious expression and argued that religion promoted abuse and inequality.

This discourse on a “lapse in morality,” on the other hand, reflects the Barre regime’s devolvement into a brutal and violent period in Somali history. Compagnon (1995, as cited by Kapteijns 2013) conceptualises the Barre era as “neopatrimonial personal rule” and differentiates between different stages of what began as a military dictatorship in the 1980s evolving to “sultanic rule,” and a regime in which the ruler and his family control and abuse national resources and power for private gain (Kapteijns 2013, 77). From 1979 to 1982 the Barre regime committed large-scale clan-based violence against civilians in the Mudug region. In 1988 through 1989 the regime committed large-scale clan-based violence against civilians in the northwest⁶⁵, and from 1989 to 1990 the Somali National Movement (SNM) committed retaliatory clan-based violence against civilians (including refugees) in the same region. The violence during the Barre regime ruptured intimate relationships, with individuals turning against each other in the name of clan and families torn apart because of the fighting.

During the period of violence in the northwest, the Barre regime carried out a variety of brutal practices aimed at subduing civilians, but in reality it only led to increased outrage. Despairing of peaceful political change, members of the *Isaaq* clan began to consider armed conflict as the only hope of defeating the regime. Many supported the armed opposition, politically or logistically, and a growing number of *Isaaq* men joined the SNM as fighters. In turn, the regime justified its increasing terror in response to the SNM; thus creating a vicious cycle of violence (Africa Watch 1990, 43).

⁶⁵ Present day Somaliland and primarily inhabited by the *Isaaq* clan.

On 26th January 1991, the battle for Mogadishu ended with the expulsion of Barre from Mogadishu and the collapse of the military regime; and on 18th May 1991 the *Isaaq*-led SNM formally seceded from the Republic of Somalia and proclaimed independence, thus creating the Republic of Somaliland (Kapteijns 2013, 242). Since 1991 Somaliland has functioned as an autonomous state and has avoided much of the violence and unrest of the south (despite intermittent inter-clan violence). Even though it has avoided the troubles of the south, Somalilanders still suffer from a legacy of trauma inflicted during the Barre regime (Bulhan 2013a, 2013b).

2.6 Islamic revival movements

Islamic revival movements that began growing in the late 1960s impacted the Somali territories, with Somalis forming their own Islamist groups; particularly *Harakat al-Islah* (Somali Muslim Brotherhood) and *Itaxaad al-Islamiya* (Islamic Union) (Liberatore 2013). These movements can be characterised as part of a process of Islamisation where schools, universities, mosque organisations, and individuals seek to promote changes at the collective and individual levels. The changes occur in Muslim thought and behaviour according to their understanding of Islamic values, requirements and doctrine (Marsden 2007b, 9; Smart and Denny 2017). Often this understanding is conceived of as a response to ‘western’ and ‘secular’ trends and “has occurred in the twentieth-century⁶⁶ in the context of transnational discourse and debate about Muslim practices, fueled by mass education, mass communication, and the spread of global capitalism and media” (White 2002, 23).

The *Jama’at al-Islah* (Society of Reform), which was part of the Somali Muslim Brotherhood (*Harakat al-Islah*)⁶⁷, sought to promote social and humanitarian activities, as well as non-violence and reconciliation after the civil war (partly for its members to attain political office) (Hansen 2014). They focused on education, not only influencing Quranic education, but also acting as the dominant force at the University of Mogadishu and the Formal Private Education Network in Somalia (FPENS)⁶⁸. They were also active in the “provision of social services such as hospitals, clinics, food, housing, and education” (Liberatore 287,

⁶⁶ Twentieth-century revivalist ideas are also often referred to as so-called ‘Islamic fundamentalism’; although fundamentalism originated in the 1920s amongst conservative Protestants in the US as the “infallibility of Scripture and ethical absolutism” (Smart and Denny 2017).

⁶⁷ *Harakat al-Islah* began in 1978.

⁶⁸ FPENS was a consortium of over 100 schools, 100,000 students, 1,700 teachers and 500 support staff (Rabasa 2009, 32).

2013); and, they influenced a trend towards more conservative forms of dress (Abdi 2007; see Chapter 4). Overall, the Muslim Brotherhood held great influence in the daily lives of urban, middle class Somalis (see Chapter 5 for more).

While women enjoyed the opportunity for Quranic and secular education, and sought formal opportunities through which to apply their new knowledge and skills, the Muslim Brotherhood found a growing influence in religious understanding, practice, and educational opportunities in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Young unemployed men who were often disenchanted with educational and employment opportunities during the Barre regime received postsecondary scholarships to Saudi Arabia to further their religious studies. Women were not extended the same opportunity for international study through the Brotherhood (although they did study in Europe and America through support of the Barre regime); however they still experienced the Muslim Brotherhood's influence towards a new religious conservatism. As some women began wearing the full *jilbaab* and *niqaab* (not an uncommon sight today), others viewed this as a challenge to their freedom of movement, association, and dress⁶⁹, and in the late 1980s women who did not cover their hair, neck, and shoulders were subject to verbal and physical harassment (Abdi 2007).

The Muslim Brotherhood and revivalist Islam gained further support after Barre passed the Family Law of 1975, legalizing gender equality through inheritance, marriage, and divorce reforms. This was believed to contradict both Islamic and customary laws, and led to the execution of ten religious intellectuals who opposed the law (Ingiriis 2015, 388). The civil war reconstituted gender relations and legitimated a new Islamic movement through the claim that "Allah's wrath has descended on Somalia and Somalis because of their digression from authentic Islam" (Abdi 2007, 194). Much of the "evil" befalling the new nation was attributed to women's "deviation from the rules," evidenced, according to Abdi, through a Somali proverb stating "*wixii xunba Xaawaa leh*," or "all evil originates from Hawa [Eve]" (ibid.).

⁶⁹ Much of the literature analysing gender during the Barre regime suggests it was an "emancipatory" and "golden era" for women (Gardner and El Bushra 2004). However, as Ingiriis (2015) expertly points out, these narratives tend to overlook women's freedom of speech, freedom to form independent associations, both rights they enjoyed under the colonial governments. He argues that urban women were recruited and exploited by the regime as "applauders" or "people being used to make ululation for the regime" (378).

Somalia's geographical position in the Horn of Africa solidified relations with the Middle East, and proved important in educational and economic life. For example, in 1974 Somalia joined the League of Arab nations as the only member whose official language was not Arabic⁷⁰. Through these geographic and diplomatic ties many Somalis migrate to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries for work in the oil industry, religious education, business, and family reunification, and many send money home through the informal *hawala* transferring system (Liberatore 289, 2013). Middle Eastern organisations also played a large role in religious charity that aided Somalis affected by the civil war, and in turn increased their popularity in the region (Hansen 2014).

In 1982 two Islamist groups (*al-Jamaa al-Islamiya* and *Wahdat al-Shabaab*) merged in the city of Hargeisa and formed *Itaxaad al-Islamiya*, which became a 'rival' to *Harakat al-Islah* (Hansen 2014). These groups were funded by Islamic associations in the Middle East, and their leaders were trained in Saudi Arabia⁷¹ during the Barre regime's emphasis on men's international study; a plan that seemingly backfired due to their opposition of his government. In Somalia these groups sought a return to Islam in its 'purest' form; they established Quranic schools and promoted Islamic education through the establishment of madrasas (Adan 1994). They were dominated by revivalist Wahabi⁷² doctrine, which found them in opposition to the modernizing mission of the Barre regime (notably Family Law sections on religious expression). They also began attacking well-established Sufi practices; they destroyed tombs, they renounced dancing and drumming, and they demanded that men grow beards and women wear the *hijab* (McGown 1999, 35).

After the civil war, and the self-declared independence of Somaliland Islamist groups have had a strong influence in the shaping of contemporary Somalia and Somaliland⁷³. At the

⁷⁰ Although there is a contingent of people as well as religious and educational institutions who would like Arabic to replace English in its primacy.

⁷¹ The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is considered to be shaped and informed by Wahabi ideology (Smart and Denny 2017).

⁷² One expression of the Islamic revival is the Salafiyah movement, particularly Wahabism. Muhammed Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1791) was concerned with the survival of Islam and aimed to amend 'dangerous' innovations that had been introduced to Islam. He emphasised *tawhid*, or the unity and oneness of God, and rejected any form of mediation between God and believers. He sought to end Sufi ideas and practices; including the veneration of saints and their tombs (Smart and Denny 2017).

⁷³ Specifically the Somalia/Somaliland movements of: *Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a* created in 1991 as a Sufi movement aimed to unify the three primary *Tariqas* and de-legitimise 'radical' Islamists; *Majma' 'Ulimadda Islaamka ee Soomaaliya* founded in 2001 as an assembly of Islamic scholars who aim to

end of colonial rule on 1st July 1960, and after a long period of ideological collisions between clan, nationalist, Islamic, and ‘modern’ identities consciously and unconsciously made and unmade through policy, Somaliland declared independence from the Federal Republic of Somalia on 18 May 1991.

In response to the growing Islamic conservatism taking hold, and as the education system enters a phase of post-civil conflict rebuilding, schools and universities are no longer ‘secular’ and include strong foundations in Islamic education through Quranic and Arabic classes. As cities and villages have been rebuilt many Quranic schools, government schools, and numerous private schools have been established. And, although it is no longer required for children to attend Quranic school before entering primary school, all children (girls and boys), starting before primary school, attend Quranic school until they have completed reading the Quran or undertaken further religious study (many Islamic universities also offer degrees in Islamic studies, including master’s degrees).

2.7 ‘Modern-ness’

The colonial mission, the Barre regime, and the revivalist movements have all had a lasting impact on what it means to be modern in Somaliland today. The British and Barre governments aimed to integrate Somaliland into the global economy through economic reforms and changes in livestock practice. Each movement educated Somalis through ‘secular’ and Islamic education. And, each has tried to promote a collective identity over what they consider ‘traditional’ clannist divisions (although as I showed they indirectly promoted clan at the same time as they worked to disassemble its prominence in society).

The trajectory of colonial, Barre, and revivalist ideologies reveals a collision between a multiplicity of selves, moral orders, and identities. This thesis aims to build on this negotiation and tension through a focus on the everyday skills and abilities women cultivate to find balance. In Chapter 7 I consider what it means to be modern in Somaliland through the debate, discussion, and contestation of values. However, it would be remiss

establish a Sharia government; *Salafiyya Jaldiida*, a Salafi movement aimed at re-examining jihad and political violence; *Jama’at al-Tabligh* with a presence of 500-700 foreign sheikhs throughout Somalia/Somaliland (Boukhars 2006); *Harakat al-Shabaab*, a movement that began growing in the early 2000s founded on the pillars of jihad and justice; *Harakat Ras Kamboni*, an anti-*al-Shabaab* alliance founded on clannist and Islamist ideologies (Hansen 2014). This is by no means a comprehensive list or analysis of the Islamist movements in the region.

not to contextualise the influence of the diaspora community in the everyday lives of Somali women.

The UK hosts the largest Somali community outside of the Somali territories, with an estimated 70,000 living in London and between 95,000 and 250,000 living in the UK (International Organisation for Migration 2006). They began migrating to the UK dating back to the 19th century, during the colonial era. Migrants worked as sailors and traders with the British merchant navy and established communities in major UK port towns. Initial migrants were primarily males from Somaliland and were entitled to British citizenship, and while many settled permanently they retained economic and social ties with the Somali territories (Liberatore 282, 2013).

In recent years there has been an increase in return migration, especially to Somaliland. Some people spend half the year in Somaliland and are what Hammond (2015) calls “part-time diaspora.” The impact of these part-time diaspora can be felt in the political, economic, and social realms. For example, university graduates and working professionals express discontent that they must now “compete with returnees for jobs, and often lose out to them, even if the returnees do not have as strong a skill set or understand the local context as well as they do” (ibid. 60). In turn returnees are granted a new form of power predicated on their passport and English language skills⁷⁴, and many young people desire to spend time abroad and possibly leave Somaliland for good. Some men and women try to achieve this through marrying someone from abroad, but this has also led to resentment amongst local men who now have to compete with bride price inflation due to saturation by eligible foreign grooms. This is not a problem unique to Somaliland, Masquelier (2005a) writes that young Mawri (Niger) men are “feminised by their inability to forge an assertive and productive masculinity through proper marriage (60). Returnees and locals have a complex relationship, and often they don’t interact much in the everyday. Additionally, interaction with diaspora is resented whereby they “are seen to be taking away the chances of others, whether in employment, marriage, the securing of affordable housing, or accessing political power” (ibid. 62).

The Somali community abroad maintains close ties with their family in Somaliland, with many people sending regular remittances. This has influenced gender relations within the

⁷⁴ Where English is considered a prestige language.

family, and I commonly heard families say they prefer their daughters and female family members to be abroad because they are considered to be more successful and reliable in sending money home to family. However, for many, the interaction between local women and diaspora women can be contested, as many believe that women who have lived abroad will negatively influence local women.

Additionally, the current drought and famine (one of many in the last years) has meant that many Somalis continue to migrate to neighbouring countries and further. There is also regular movement of Somalis through illegal migration routes, called *tahriib*. During my time in Somaliland several acquaintances successfully went on *tahriib*, while some were caught in Sudan and Libya and deported (for more on how women help in such instances see Chapter 5).

Politico-historical contextualisation of the circumstances that have influenced Somaliland's current understanding and practice of what is deemed morally "correct" suggests a tension between 'tradition' and 'modernity.' In this thesis I address the different traditions of Islam as ideal types, although as will become evident in the subsequent chapters, they cannot easily be separated into categories of 'traditionalist' or 'modernist.' 'Tradition' tends to imply conservative and unchanging, while 'modern' seemingly implies changing. Following Masquelier (2009) traditionalists are "those who claim to follow inherited religious traditions and reject "new" ones" (2). As such, in this thesis traditionalist Islam tends to follow more mystical practices. Additionally, what it means to be modern does not necessarily entail a shift away from mystical Islam towards revivalist Islam, rather I argue that for young Somali women what it means to be modern is forging a "new" morality through the folding in of Islamic traditions as part of a particular postcolonial context⁷⁵.

Thus, this thesis focuses on the continuing importance of Islamic traditions in the practice of correct morality for people whose lives are increasingly tied to urban centres, capitalist economic activities, and which include greater mobility, connectivity, and education. Such a folding in of moralities results in frequent negotiation and deliberation, particularly in reference to gender relations and women's everyday experiences. However, such tension is not simply relegated to the power relations within Islamic traditions, ethnicity, nationalism, and clannism. Women in contemporary Somaliland must also manage the

⁷⁵ Similarly, Soares (2005) argues of a co-existence between "Sufi," "reformist," and "postcolonial" Islamic traditions in Nioro, Mali.

tension created during the folding in of moralities within the influences of media, and the ways that power relations are represented and influenced through these mediums. The television, mobile phones, and the internet as well as, books have all played significant roles in the making of contemporary understandings and practices of correct morality and gender relations.

For example, young women are increasingly consuming mainstream Arab, Indian, and American films and dramas on television. These films and dramas sometimes depict a form of romance that upends young women's ideas of love and marriage towards an ideal where love and romance are enacted differently than the ways their mothers and grandmothers experienced them. Additionally, mobile phone applications like WhatsApp and Viber allow young women to easily keep in contact with friends and family abroad. The sharing of ideas and information between places like Hargeisa and London is now commonplace, and influences young men and women's conceptions of what life abroad may be like. This has not only influenced young people to go on *tahriib* in search of 'more,' but it has also influenced their understandings of the value of materialism; *why can't a young woman in Hargeisa also wear the lipstick her cousin in London wore in a WhatsApp picture?* Finally, the internet has put previously inaccessible information at young people's disposal. More and more internet cafes are opening, more families have internet at home, and now people can get data on their cellphones. University students can now access free articles and books, they can read international newspapers, and they can communicate with scholars and students from all over the world. They can also seek out YouTube videos showing the lessons of prominent Islamic scholars in Pakistan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia.

Print media has become increasingly popular with regular circulation of local newspapers in both Somali and English. Dadka, Haatuf, Geeska Afrika, and Somaliland Today are sold by street vendors in downtown Hargeisa and delivered to subscribing hotels and businesses. News reports on Al-Shabaab attacks prompt heated debate on buses, in cafes, and at tea shops. Leading up to Somalia's (delayed) 2017 election, the English print newspaper Somaliland Today printed a story about Fadumo Dayib, the first Somali woman to run for president. The story created led to discussion as to whether a woman could be president; a contentious issue for both men and women in Somalia and Somaliland.

Book shops have also become popular with students and the educated elite. Since the start of the Hargeysa International Book Fair in 2008 there has been a demand for books in

English and Somali. School books are sold in wheelbarrows near the Cali Matan Mosque in downtown Hargeisa, with nearby shops selling Islamic studies texts, the Quran, and men's Islamic clothing. The Redsea-Online Book Shop, also nearby, sells Somali and English literature and history, as well as the emerging genre of self-help and self-improvement.

I first became aware of this growing trend towards self-improvement in 2010, while speaking with students and friends. One friend, Jimcaale, was influenced by the famous American psychologist Dr. Phil. He had read many of Dr. Phil's books (presumably brought by visitors to Hargeisa) and frequently asked me how he could continue to improve himself. Over my subsequent visits and my PhD fieldwork I observed male, university students carrying self-improvement and psychology books on the bus or as they milled around university campuses. I even helped edit a book titled *Seven Simple Steps to Achieve Happiness* by one of my students, Dr. Abdisalan Sulub Ahmed.

Women are also interested in self-improvement books, but many have expressed discontent with the genre. Timiirro, another student, explained that some books, like *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck* by Mark Manson, are problematically applied to, and somewhat incompatible with, Somali culture. She says "some books will tell you like you have to be like someone who's open like someone who can trust everyone, and like you know you have to go out of your zone, like your comfort zone. To be honest in Hargeisa it's like, in our culture it's quite difficult. You cannot just pop into any party or like any place and say oh hi my name is Timiirro and I'm trying to get out of my comfort zone. You cannot...I was thinking [while reading the book] no way that's so difficult in our culture" (Taitt 2017, 50). Timiirro, Jimcaale, and Abdisalan illustrate that self-improvement is becoming more mainstream, and there is a growing demand for it to be adapted to 'fit' Somali culture; which is what *Qoys Kaab* classes have done.

The increasing penetration of these forms of media mean that markers of identity like religion, ethnicity, nationalism, and clannism exist in a parallel and equally 'real' print and digital world; a world in which it is important to be part of being 'modern.' Although it is beyond the remit of this thesis to fully explore the influences of media and media as a form of commodification (not only as something that people literally buy into, but also in the ways that charisma has become a commodity for revivalist sheikhs, Imams and scholars (for more see Soares 2005, 176), it is important to contextualise contemporary moral practices across a multitude of ideological contexts that women must manage; including that of print

and digital media. Women manage ideological and political collisions that inform the morality systems that they are embedded within, and that they are influenced by, and can potentially transform.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Field and method

Drawing on participant observation, interviews, and informal group discussions this thesis asks, *how do women construct and negotiate intimacy and morality in their everyday lives?*

These methods support a theoretical exploration of everyday intimacy through themes of Islamic destiny, modern-ness, morality, temporality, and hope in Somaliland. In this chapter I describe many of the parameters of this study, including the methods employed and the access they enabled. I acknowledge limitations and constraints faced while conducting fieldwork, as well as reflexively locating myself within this study.

The 'Field'

This thesis is based on eighteen months of fieldwork (preceded and followed by numerous visits) conducted in Somaliland between July 2014 and December 2015. The primary location in which this research was conducted is the capital of Somaliland, Hargeisa.

The fieldwork this study is built around was primarily urban, based in Hargeisa, but also included travel to several cities and villages where my friends' families lived, where religious gatherings were held, and for my leisure time. Travelling to Aw-Barkhadle, Arabsiyo, Gebilay, Berbera, Borama, Burco, Las Geel⁷⁷, and small rural hamlets around these cities and towns for research facilitated a snapshot of daily life for both urban and rural people, as well as access to a diversity of clans.

Few roads connect local cities and towns, and travelling to Borama includes passing through Arabsiyo and Gabiley no matter how circuitous it may appear on a map. Travel to Burco involves travel through Aw-Barkhadle, Las Geel, and Berbera. My research also included visits to rural hamlets for religious gatherings and a wedding. These hamlets are located off the main road and require expert knowledge of routes, and directions to areas are always explained according to rocks, groups of thorns or watering holes.

⁷⁷ According to a 2014 UNFPA Population Estimation Survey the entire population of Somaliland is estimated to be about 3.5 million. Hargeisa, Aw-Barkhadle, Arabsiyo, Gabiley, Las Geel, and Berbera are part of the Woqooyi Galbeed region of Somaliland, whose estimated population is about 1.25 million (1,242,003). Borama is part of the Awdal region, whose total population is estimated at about 670 thousand (673,936). Burco is part of the Togdheer region, whose total population is estimated to be about 720 thousand (722,084). The figures used in this survey represent the most recent population estimates and are the figures used by the current government.

The choice of Hargeisa as my home base for this study was based on previous work and research conducted in Hargeisa. I lived in Hargeisa for twelve months in 2009-2010 teaching at the University of Hargeisa (UoH). I worked at UoH upon completion of my master's studies in the hopes of finding inspiration for PhD research. I served as head of the Faculty of English, which facilitated my introduction to professional networks and friendships that would aid my fieldwork. I also visited Hargeisa in 2012 working on a research project through New York University Abu Dhabi, directed by Dr. Rahma Abdulkadir. This research focused on female cutting.

From my first visit in 2009 to my subsequent return visits in 2012, 2014-2015, 2016 I observed large scale infrastructural change in Hargeisa. Roads, buildings, and internet connectivity improved drastically. The diasporic influence is greatly felt in Hargeisa with many returnees from the UK, Canada, the US, Europe and the Gulf turning their hands to business and the arts. The presence of returning diaspora increases during summer school breaks with noticeable economic and social implications. Since my first visit to Hargeisa in 2009 there has been an increased presence of those from the Gulf and Turkey in education and business. Towards the end of my fieldwork the crises in Yemen and Syria brought an influx of refugees and non-Somali entrepreneurs.

My previous professional networks and former students-turned-friends played a crucial role in enabling me to conduct research in Somaliland, especially in the first stages of my fieldwork. Their formal support of my research and my day-to-day welfare were vital in obtaining carefully reviewed ethical clearance from the UCL Anthropology Department ethics committee, as were contingent plans for alternative project locations (namely Djibouti).

Dr. Hussein Bulhan, who was the President of the UoH during my first visit in 2009-2010, acted as my primary 'guardian' in Somaliland. He was setting up a new university, Frantz Fanon University (FFU), as I prepared to begin my PhD fieldwork and it was agreed that in exchange for teaching at FFU the university would sponsor my visa, organise housing with armed guards⁷⁸, and 'look after' me. In a sense, for my PhD research I was returning to a similar position in society that I held in 2009-2010 – that of teacher. Over time my contacts diversified, my 'title' as teacher expanded to include researcher, and my fieldwork

⁷⁸ Armed guards are mandatory at places of residence for all foreign nationals residing in Somaliland.

developed independently from my role at the university, although FFU remained a point of stability for the life I built in Somaliland.

Throughout my PhD fieldwork I resided in Hargeisa, specifically the neighbourhood of Jigjiga-Yar. In 2009-2010 I also lived in Jigjiga-Yar, thus my familiarity with the neighbourhood facilitated a quick transition to feeling comfortable walking and traveling in the area. Additionally, FFU is located in Jigjiga-Yar and within walking distance from the house I resided in. Jigjiga-Yar is one of two neighbourhoods associated with foreigners, primarily due to the Maansoor Hotel. The hotel hosts foreign journalists and delegations, and numerous NGOs house their employees there. Additionally, the hotel is popular for informal and formal political meetings. Wealthy Somalis often have their wedding ceremonies at the hotel, and universities host graduations there too.

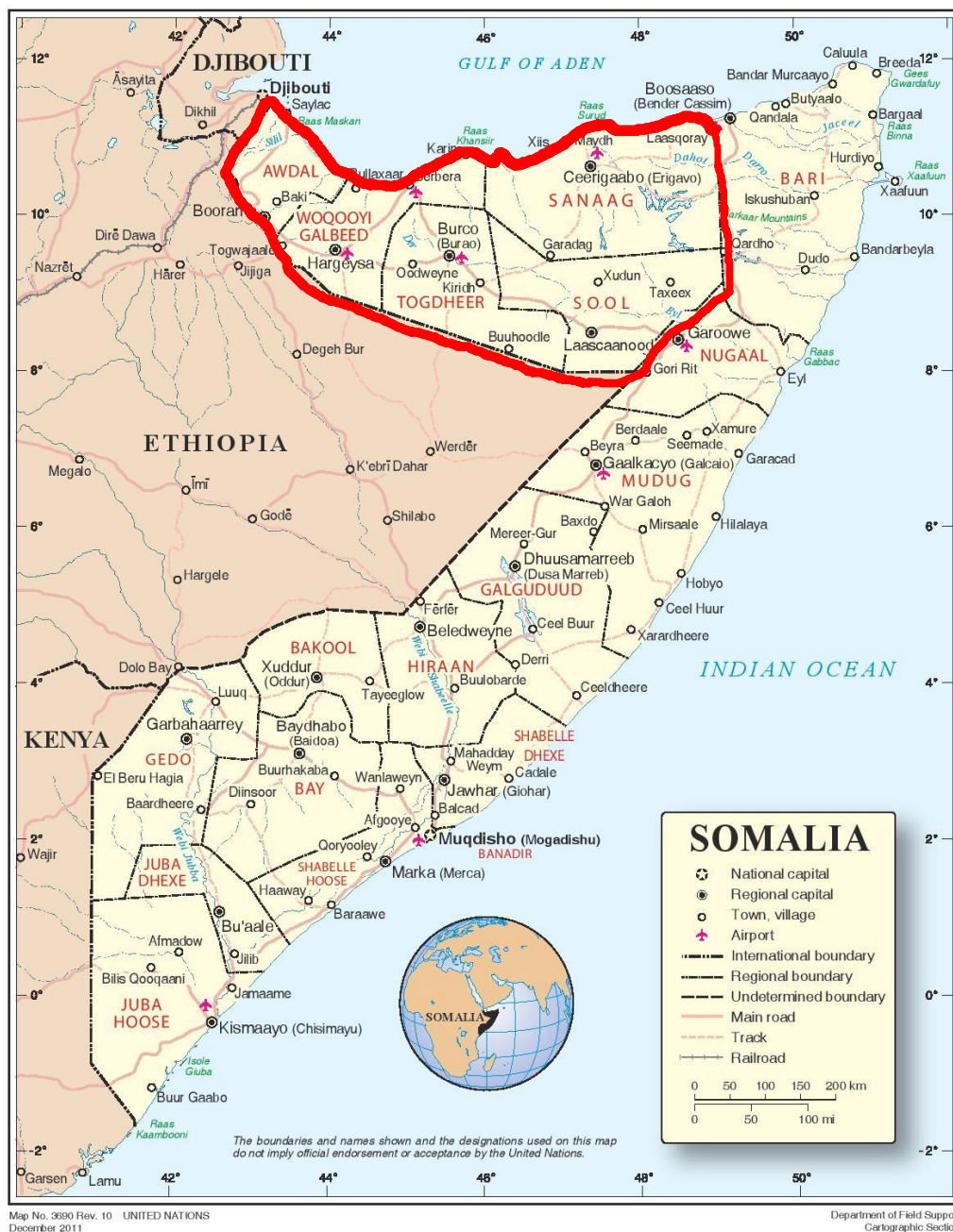


Figure 2: Map of Somalia. United Nations, Cartographic Section, map no. 3690 Rev. 10. The outline indicates the independent area of Somaliland where fieldwork for the present study was conducted.

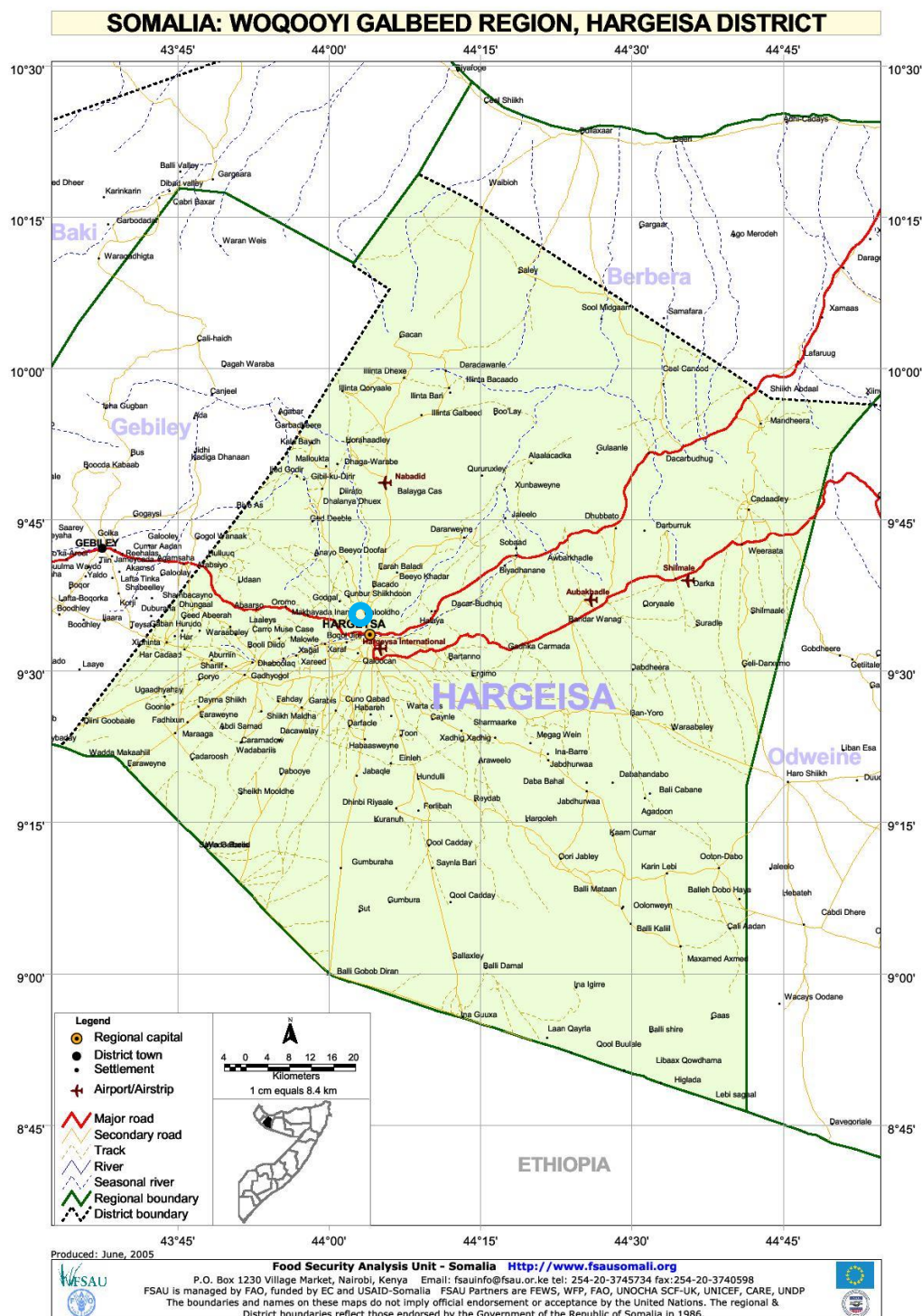


Figure 3: Map of Hargeisa. United Nations, Cartographic Section, map no. 3690 Rev. 10. The outline indicates the independent area of Somaliland where fieldwork for the present study was conducted.

Methods and access

My previous work in Hargeisa in 2009-2010, and my subsequent visit in 2012 showed me how difficult it is to make local Somali female friends, much less be invited to someone's home. It is even more difficult to enter a home without being treated as a guest who must be served, or seated with the men of the household. Anticipating difficulty in meeting women who would welcome me into the intimacy of their daily lives and their homes, I attended henna classes and cooking classes to meet women of different backgrounds, classes, clans, and ages. I also visited beauty salons, and relied on my past and present students to find comfort and build trust with women. By inserting myself as much as possible into the women's world and by learning the skills important to be a woman, I was eventually able to enter other intimate spaces. This was facilitated by the [new] focus on self-improvement and the widespread availability of classes on a range of different "*farsamada gacanta*," or "hand skills" including cooking, knitting, henna, writing and reading (in Somali)⁷⁹.

The intimate nature of this research requires that the primary method is participant observation, grounded in Michael Jackson's (1989) descriptions of radical empiricism and ethnographic enquiry. According to Jackson, radical empiricism is "a philosophy of the experience of objects and actions in which the subject itself is a participant" (1989, 2). It is a method of ethnographic enquiry that acknowledges the ways in which the researcher is continually being changed, as well as the ways the researcher changes the experience of others.

Radical empiricism seeks to grasp the ways that words and ideas create the web in which we live, and how they are grounded in the ordinary events and experiences of everyday life

⁷⁹ Formal *farsamada gacanta* classes began in the early 2000s. They started at this time because women's education levels were low and few women studied in secondary school and university. The classes became a way for women to learn new skills that interested them. When women finished the courses they would try and find work applying their new skills or they continued cooking and knitting in the home (personal communication with Fadumo Elmi Dahir 5 July 2017). Additionally, as a fellow student I observed that for some women these classes are a way to spend time outside the home with friends, for others it is to learn a skill that can potentially lead to income earning opportunities, and as my cooking teacher explained, some women attend classes because these skills are not being taught in the home. She emphasized the other students' lower economic class, lack of formal education, and 'poor' hygiene as reasons why cooking, beauty, and henna classes are needed; young women need to explicitly learn these skills to marry and keep a house. The teacher suggested that some young women may not learn these skills because they come from large families where the mother may work outside the home, and thus explicit transfer of knowledge 'failed'.

(Jackson 1989, 9). An ethnographic focus on the ordinary is not new within the Anthropology of Islam or for anthropologists who study everyday aspects of Muslim life.

Through the lens of everyday Islam (Marsden and Retsikas 2013) some authors focus on minute details of courtship practices (Carey 2012), marriage (Abu-Lughod 1985, 1992, 1999; Marsden 2007c), and family life (Ring 2006). They write about the hopes individuals and couples may have, but also the doubts, fears, and failures they encounter as they balance pious ideals with the realities of daily life. Others focus on gendered power dynamics and the struggles women face when challenging societal norms of 'good' women (Abu-Lughod 1998, 2011, 2013; Wikan 1877, 1985, 1990a, 1991, 2008). Some begin their study of Islam as a discursive tradition (Asad 1989; Masquelier 2001; Soares 2000) yet challenge notions that "being Muslim" and living "Islam" are only related to Quranic text (Marsden 2012a, 2012b, 2010, 2009, 2008a, 2008b, 2007a, 2007b, 2005; Schielke 2010, 2009a, 2009b, 2008, 2006).

Everyday Islam not only refers to a methodological focus on day-to-day routines, but also to illuminating women's commitments to Islam, an often "undervalued" aspect of studies on women in Islam and particularly in Africa (Masquelier 2009, 28). Much is placed on women's transgressions, rather than on the religious duties they perform; thus women are often expected to be less disciplined and pious, or "less Muslim" (ibid.). It is by focusing on the everyday lives of Somali women that I became able to not only participate in and observe the ways that women understand and carry out what they believe to be religious duty, but, further, to understand such practices in the larger context of the challenges and barriers they face when trying to gain Islamic knowledge and skills.

My research focus on the everyday began in finding my own routine as an ethnographer. I began a routine in the early months of my research in Hargeisa. Teaching at FFU, attending henna classes, and cooking classes all provided structure and stability to my otherwise uncertain days. My day-to-day life involved mundane activities like taking the bus to the market, walking to the remittance service to collect money, and visiting Maansoor hotel to watch the news on their TV. Eventually these activities became ordinary, and they eventually grew to include a routine of visiting friends at their homes or at cafes. Over time, my friendships deepened and I was invited to family hamlets in the countryside, to

weddings, and to places they thought might help my research throughout the northern and coastal parts of Somaliland.

In this research participant observation took numerous forms, most often following the lead of friends and informants. Much of my time was spent sitting in women's kitchens, on the floor of their bedrooms, or sipping tea and sharing a meal. My closest friends introduced me to their families and friends. They took me to different places throughout Hargeisa and Somaliland. Their curiosity towards my life also meant considerable time was spent in my house, talking about my life.

Nearly half way into my research I regularly joined *sitaat* gatherings and became a student at *Qoys Kaab* family and marriage classes, adding to my weekly routines. I developed a serious interest in creating safe female spaces to help me cope with harassment. Along with my friends I found release and joy in *sitaat* gatherings, which they explained as my becoming 'closer to God.' At *Qoys Kaab* I found practical advice in what to say and how to act when harassed. I eventually began whispering '*Bismillah*' (in the name of God) in response to a men shouting at me.

Over time a close friend and I became consumed by visits to diviners. My love life became just as interesting to several friends as theirs was to me. Such visits to diviners became important in considering the moral failures, difficulties, and negotiations individuals face (a response to Hirschkind 2006 and Mahmood 2004, whose ethnographies have been critiqued⁸⁰ for not showing moments of their informants' moral failure).

During these moments of participant observation I often asked explicit questions, questions that I had previously reflected on while writing field notes in my private space. I also asked prepared questions during group discussions with my female students. We informally spoke about the role of Islam in their everyday lives, specifically in regard to their FGC or dating. Additionally, I conducted several formal interviews with *sitaat* leaders that commanded a type of respect and formality that participant observation could not give.

⁸⁰ See Schielke 2009.

The 'data' collected was processed when I returned to my room in the university house. I took breaks from Hargeisa every two to three months. These short interludes were essential moments for ethnographic reflection and important for mental health. If there was something of particular interest or which seemed confusing I would bring it up and discuss it with my Somali teacher and research assistant, or my closest female friend⁸¹. They would provide their interpretations and explain particular aspects of Somali culture or Islam to me, allowing for my friends and informants to describe localised understandings of concepts and terms (like modern-ness) (Janson 2014; Rosaldo 1980; Schulz 2012). These conversations often led to deeper reflections that became important in the writing of this thesis.

The people I conducted research with were from varied backgrounds; however, by nature of my work and the area I lived in I predominately interacted with middle class, educated, urban women. My henna and cooking classes led to friendships with several unschooled, low socioeconomic status women with rural origins. Additionally, some middle class, educated friends had unschooled house girls and servants whom I befriended and who provided an important counter perspective in this study.

In most cases the financial security of the friends I made depended on small scale businesses like running an NGO or owning a bakery. The families with poorer socioeconomic status depended on money from driving buses, selling *qaat* in the market, remittances or international donor money. The level of income corresponded to education, with some friends having a university degree and others being unable to read or write. The women I met were from different clans, hence my frequent travel throughout the city⁸². Additionally, women grew up in households with very diverse and different understandings of gender norms and roles. However, all the women I met had considerable household duties; the differences lay in whether or not they were able to study or work. In the chapters to follow, I distinguish between the different voices represented in this study, and highlight women's similarities in morals and values.

⁸¹ When discussing my fieldwork I always took great care to respect the privacy of specific individuals, by being intentionally vague with regard to facts that I knew would make them identifiable.

⁸² The city is informally divided geographically along clan lines.

Although this study is made up of different voices, it is not possible to represent the plurality of voices and experiences in Somaliland. In general in this thesis, when I refer to Somali women, unless otherwise specified, it is to these urban, middle class women, and my findings cannot be generalised to the wider Somali population. Firstly, this research focuses on the intimate relationships of women, and is predominantly written from the perspective of women. This is primarily due to access, specifically the mutual trust required in friendships to gain intimate access. It was very easy to talk to men in Somaliland, but I would not have been able to ask them intimate questions about their bodies or sexual relations.

Secondly, this study is focused on locally born and raised Somali women, not diaspora women who have returned to visit or resettle. Although one of my closest friends and informants was a woman who lived in North America for a period of her life, her integration in Hargeisa society was very different than many other diaspora women I encountered. She had immediate and extended family in Somaliland who lived in smaller towns and formed part of the educated elite (to be highly educated and to value education is a stereotype of her clan given their geographic location to several highly regarded universities in the country). She married a local man who had no desire to live outside of Somaliland and who never applied for a foreign passport or residency. She travelled by bus, she did not own any land herself (although her grandfather and father owned a small plot), and she lived in a house rented by her husband. She relied on her husband for a monthly allowance even though she was educated in North America and had professional qualifications which would make it easy for her to find self-sustaining work (she did open a small business for a short time). In the 18 months that I lived in Hargeisa she did not socialise or spend time with other women from the diaspora. She socialised with local women, and her business catered to locals (as reflected in the prices she charged for daily goods).

In contrast most diaspora women interacted largely with each other. Their social circles were primarily comprised of diaspora women and families. The diaspora tended to form a rich and powerful elite, different from powerful local elite. There was also a sense of entitlement amongst some diaspora, and many seemed to show some disdain and ignorance towards locals. Many diaspora returned to start businesses and to make money,

or to teach 'correct' Salafi interpretations of Islam. Overall I observed a large divide between the diaspora and locals.

Finally, this study focuses on young women due to the nature of how and where I was able to meet and socialise with them. A majority of my female informants were at a similar stage in their life course trajectory; they were unmarried but of eligible age, newly married, or mothers of young children. Several other older women nearing menopause and post-menopausal were also critical to my understanding of Somali society and intimacy but my day to day interactions were primarily with younger women.

A characterising constraint in the early months of fieldwork was my level of the Somali language. I had studied colloquial Somali for a year at SOAS, and with a private tutor in London before beginning field work. I found (and still find) the language difficult. A level of intermediate fluency is generally learnt by diaspora Somalis and non-natives by full immersion in Somali social life rather than by academic study. I slowly progressed in the first few months, and my learning continued throughout my fieldwork with the help of a private language tutor and research assistant, Cabdixakiim Cabdilahi Cumer. Learning Somali became, in a sense, an integral part of my research, and a good way of creating bonds, as friends would get actively involved in my learning, teaching me new expressions and helping in social and research situations.

It was also in these early months that I began to feel the psychological burden of daily harassment. My first experiences in Hargeisa in 2009-2010 and 2012 were fairly 'sheltered' compared to my PhD research. In my earlier visits my primary role was as a teacher and much of my time was spent at UoH or the house where I lived. I rarely explored the city alone, and practically never on foot or by bus⁸³. This was not out of fear for safety, but more from the time commitment of teaching at UoH. During my PhD research the time I spent at FFU was minimal so I could focus on my research. In an attempt to experience the city in a similar way to my friends and informants I relied on the bus, walking, or lifts from friends to navigate the city. The sight of a foreigner, especially a woman who is 6ft, moving

⁸³ This is worth emphasising for the mere fact that foreigners are not generally visible in society, much less seen walking or on the bus. Additionally the bus takes a very long time to get anywhere, the buses tend to be in poor condition, they are over-crowded, and they are very hot and emit a lot of polluting exhaust fumes. The bus system is adequate, but requires extensive walking depending on where you are going.

throughout the city and the country is rare. Thus, I became the subject of much curiosity, which resulted in various forms of harassment, something I elaborate on below. At the same time I also gained respect from the community for traveling as they did. Most foreigners had a private car, some with drivers and armed guards. Many people told me I was 'tough' and that they respected me for walking and traveling by bus.

As the end of the year (2014) approached, my fieldwork became a frenetic series of movements between teaching commitments, attending henna and cooking classes, my new social engagements with friends, and language classes. Although quite tiring, these early months allowed me to create a social web through which key aspects of my research unfolded. As 2015 began I was a regular guest in several friends' houses, and eventually treated like anyone else and expected to adhere to gendered duties and norms⁸⁴. This transition from guest to visitor became crucial for participating and observing the daily lives and the small intimacies on which this study rests.

Early in 2015 my finances became strained and I began working at a local NGO founded by a close friend's husband. During this time I also started to visit cities outside of Hargeisa for research. I visited Sufi tombs, I visited Gabiley with a student from the town, and I stayed in Borama for two weeks during a university break. I also began organising societies and social activities with the students. We formed a women's group where students took turns leading discussions on topics important to them and on topics they knew would help my research (like what it means to obey your husband), they began inviting me to their homes for Friday lunch so we could talk in private, and some of them began coming with me to *sitaat* gatherings or *Qoys Kaab* classes.

Thus, during my entire research period my other roles in Hargeisa and Somaliland transformed from teacher to include researcher, and local NGO worker. My affiliations with local NGOs (rather than international NGOs) gave me more social legitimacy and connectivity since I did not live in a closed compound or have a car with a driver, a legitimacy that was enhanced by my multiple roles. In the early months I was often asked what I did after I taught. My response that I met friends and carried out research confused many people who only observed me having tea or staying at friend's houses. This

⁸⁴ This included sitting separately from men, remaining covered when men were in the house, cooking food and serving it to men first while only eating their leftovers, not laughing too loudly when men were in the house, etc.

contrasted with most other foreigners who were busy in their offices or compounds, and out of visual sight from the general public. When I began working at the local NGO people seemed to think my time was being filled wisely; they were also happy that I was 'helping' the community by teaching and working at an NGO⁸⁶.

Invitations to relax with friends increased now that they felt responsible for my well-being, and as they took a more active interest in my research. I was invited to more weddings, more *sitaat*⁸⁷ gatherings, and I was invited to *Qoys Kaab* Islamic family marriage classes to learn more about 'Somali culture' and Islam. I was also invited to friend's homes for meals as it was assumed that living without my family meant I was eating badly and was lonely at mealtimes.

It was also during this time that many in the extended community began to raise the question of a potential conversion to Islam. My immediate network of friends and colleagues knew that I was merely interested in learning about Islam and that I respected the religion and believers. They were satisfied with my interest in Islam and patiently explained particular aspects of it to me and answered any questions I had. However, the wider community that was aware of my interest began assuming conversion was nigh. As such certain 'expert' lecturers at *Qoys Kaab* would lead a group prayer for my conversion, and the local shop keeper would plead with me to tell him if I converted so he could give me a gift. My close friends typically laughed during these situations or explained that I am learning for my research. As much as I found humour in certain situations and frustration in others, I do think my personal emphasis on the respect I found for the religion played a role in my personal safety⁸⁸.

⁸⁶ In my first month of fieldwork a Norwegian-Somali who set up several businesses in Hargeisa combatively asked me what I was doing for his country, implying that if I'm not giving anything I should go home. This is not the general feeling of diaspora or locals, however it is somewhat expected that if you are there for any extended time, as a foreigner, you will 'give' something.

⁸⁷ 'Sufi-in-essence' gatherings, see Chapter 5.

⁸⁸ In this vein I wore appropriate clothing, covered my body according to Somali norms, ate with my right hand when appropriate (I am left handed), ate in the women's area when appropriate, did not shake men's hands when appropriate, and showed an interest in Islamic customs and norms, etc. Not only was there an underlying fear of an Al-Shabaab attack at various points of my time in Somaliland, but there are many vigilantes who follow and act on anti-'western' hate speech often taught during Friday sermons at the mosque. On numerous occasions I was approached by religious zealots and vigilantes who threatened my safety on the basis of me representing the 'west.'

My fieldwork, on the whole, consisted of my failure to be completely 'ordinary' (Rabinow 1977). My complete outsider status was a hindrance and a source of frustration at times, and a great help and source of humour at other times. My physical appearance, the way I carried myself, my interests, and my non-believing status all made me a complete outsider. I am a very tall, white woman who, according to many people on the street, walks 'like a man' due to the speed of my stride. I often preferred long walks to friends' houses instead of the bus, and prioritised physical exercise in a context where women's physical activity is limited and rarely valued. Although I have previously lived and travelled in countries that follow *Shari'a* law, and regardless of my attempt to learn Arabic several years ago, and my familiarity with the women's room in the mosque, my non-believing status always set me apart.

Although all of these signifiers of my outside status were great sources of frustration at times, and impacted the types of access I had for this study⁸⁹, my 'ignorance' was also a great facilitator. A majority of people assumed I knew nothing of Somali culture and nothing of Islam. Although I had some knowledge, there was much for me to learn. I found it helpful to let new friends painstakingly explain experiences we had just encountered, specific aspects of Islam or Somali politics. Although there were times I was already familiar with some information imparted to me, my status as an 'ignorant outsider' allowed me to ask more questions, to be curious, and to make mistakes. Not only did my friends find this at times endearing, they also enjoyed teaching me how to live, act, think, and believe.

The object of my study, intimate relationships, was brought up constantly by various friends and informants. They knew I was interested in different types of intimate relationships - with the body, other women in the community, the divine, boyfriends and husbands - and whenever there was an opportunity to learn more or talk to someone about their intimate relationship I was told to rearrange whatever I had planned. Eventually, the pervasiveness of the types of intimate relationships I was studying and eventually became involved in - *sitaat*, visits to diviners - meant there was no need to 'prompt' friends and informants.

⁸⁹ See section 3.4 for more on access.

3.2 Note on this thesis' use of Quranic text

It was very common for random people, acquaintances, informants and friends to direct me to the Quran for further understanding of things they were explaining or activities we were taking part in. It was also not uncommon for individuals to ask me to recite the Bible or for me to reference specific passages that relate to the Quran. More often than not I found individuals were more knowledgeable about the Bible than I was. Sometimes students would bring a 'pocket Quran' as a gift at the end of term. It became important to not only appreciate but at times to understand and have deeper knowledge of the Quran. Most discussions on FGC involved reference to hadith. Friends explained the moral permissibility of visiting diviners through deep Quranic explanation.

One challenge when writing about Islam is how to document the diversity of Muslim societies in the context of specific cultural and historical conditions without violating the unitary nature of Islam. As Masquelier (2009) asks, "how can the diverse and diverging beliefs and practices be understood within a solitary idea of Islam?" In response this thesis shows that although Somalilanders disagree about what "Islam" is (i.e. 'correct' Islam), no matter one's Islamic tradition, they all agree about Islam's singularity as one "true" Islam. The Quran and its teachings are a large part of everyday Somali life suggesting that the study of Islam is not purely local, instead, Islamic discourses and practices intersect at the local, supralocal (as a state and beyond), and translocal (Soares 2000, 283). Thus, engaging in and with the Quran is not only one way that this thesis takes Islam to be a discursive tradition (Asad 1986, Soares 2005, Masquelier 2009), but also a methodological necessity arising from the field site. It is impossible to write about destiny, female circumcision, and divination without also including the Quranic debates, discussions, and negotiations my friends and informants engaged in.

As this thesis is not a theological study, nor an anthropological study of theory, the Quran is quoted in this thesis only rarely. However, it proves important to include Quranic reference to "begin, as Muslims do, from the concept of a discursive tradition that includes and relates itself to the founding texts of the Qur'an and the Hadith" (Asad 1986, 14). In so doing this thesis takes orthodoxy to be "what is deemed correct practice" embedded within relationships of power (Soares 2005, 8; Asad 1986). Through such a perspective it becomes possible to see how orthodoxy might change over time through debates, discussions, conflicts, and negotiations over practices (i.e. what is or is not correct). Local,

supralocal, and translocal understandings of living Islam and the different ways of being Muslim thus become possible.

When I first began this research my knowledge of the Quran was limited. With the help of Cabdixakiim Cabdilaahi Cumar, Huda Elmi, the teachers at *Qoys Kaab*, and my students at FFU I gained a localised understanding of the Quran and enactment of the hadith. Upon my return to London I relied heavily on the help and guidance of Muhammed Ahmed, a PhD candidate at SOAS. Muhammed provided scriptural insight and academic guidance, as well as many clarifying conversations. In addition to Muhammed the British Association for Islamic Studies (BRAIS) gave me the opportunity to share a section of this thesis as part of a panel on anthropology and Islam. The comments and discussion during the panel, and afterwards proved challenging and insightful in regards to my use of Islamic theology.

3.3 On ethics and friendship

To protect the anonymity of my friends and informants I have changed all names and have tried to alter other features that may make them identifiable. It is only in instances where an individual's status is a point of honour and respect- sheikh, *sitaat* chairwoman, or founder of *Qoys Kaab*- or extreme gratitude - as research assistant - that I sought, and obtained, their permission to use their real name. I have also attempted to protect anonymity by not specifying the names of towns or neighbourhoods where I collected some data. It is only in cases where specific *sitaat* groups requested that I name the town that I have done so. I have also left out details that could potentially be used against my friends and informants, for example details of sexual encounters. Throughout my stay, I frequently reminded my friends and informants of my research and the reason for my presence in Somaliland.

Over time, many of my primary informants became friends, blurring the line between ethnographic research and personal attachment. I strove to be as open as possible about the fact that I remained an anthropology PhD student while also being a guest or friend. However, in writing up this thesis I have come to realise that the most important ethnographic insights are a product of the depth of my relationships and the intimacy they afforded me. I have tried to respect both my friendships and my anthropological intent to write a thesis grounded in ethnography.

3.4 A note on language and access

This thesis focuses on the ‘divine’ rather than ‘Islam’ for two reasons. Firstly, many Somalis follow a mystic variety of Islam that includes aspects of Sufi tradition⁹⁰. Additionally, many emphasise formal textual Islam while simultaneously reducing Sufi traditions into versions of purified Islam (Marsden 2005). For example, few women openly identified themselves as Sufi during my fieldwork, and many others rejected the label ‘Sufi’, yet their practice of spirituality included aspects of the Sufi tradition. It is not important whether women are categorically Sufi or not, such a label is ineffective due to the fluidity of spiritual practice and understanding. Rather, what is of interest is the more hidden nature of Sufi tradition and the textual emphasis many draw on to justify their spirituality. Thus, analysing the ‘divine’ rather than focusing on Sufi, Wahhabi, Salafi, or Tablighi⁹¹ scriptural divisions incorporates the plurality and fluidity of Islams understood and in practiced in everyday life. By focusing on a diversity of beliefs and practices among Muslims I challenge Orientalist views of Islam and Muslim societies as timeless and unchanging, but I also avoid arguing that there is a singular Somaliland understanding and practice of Islam located on the periphery and distinct from a ‘purer’ form of Islam presumably located in the Arab Middle East. Instead this thesis takes the multiple traditions of Islam in Somaliland to be rooted in a discursive tradition based on many, often contested, correct understandings of Islamic and moral practice.

Secondly, my analysis linguistically situates itself on the ‘divine’ rather than ‘Islam’ more broadly for reasons of access. During my 18 months of fieldwork, and my previous time in Somaliland I was not invited to, nor granted access to mosque activities. Women were generous in explaining their own experiences at mosque or in Quranic School, but I was not permitted access to these spaces. Basr did speak with her local imam who agreed to meet with me, but I was warned that I was not to take the space of the mosque ‘lightly’, meaning it was a place of deep contemplation, reflection, knowledge, and prayer. I decided not to pursue entering the mosque after my first and only visit in Hargeisa.

Early in my research I visited the Cali Mataan Mosque in downtown Hargeisa with Nasra. She was aware of my research and thought it would be a good way for me to meet more

⁹⁰ Including, but not limited to, ecstatic worship at shrines or *sitaat*; and emphasis on the values of benevolence, generosity, and solidarity.

⁹¹ There is a new Tablighi Jamaat in Hargeisa that has many male and female followers. The Tablighi Jamaat is considered part of the revivalist movement “for the reawakening of faith” and the “reaffirmation of Muslim religion-cultural identity” (Amhad 2017, accessed August 3, 2017).

women. We decided to attend a Friday sermon, something I had done many times with friends when I lived in Abu Dhabi. Once we found a place to sit I was quickly aware that I had not dressed modestly enough, my bare feet and wrists were showing while many of the other women were wearing socks and gloves. When the sermon started the women's prayer room was full, with women sitting in the hallway and on the steps. The imam was passionate as he spoke in a mix of Somali and Arabic espousing the multiple virtues believers ought to have. As the sermon continued the word 'believers' came into focus, "only believers are allowed in the mosque. A believer is someone who prays, who performs their duties." It became clear that I was not necessarily welcome in the mosque as a perceived 'non-believer,' and we left before the end of the sermon.

I confided in a close male informant about my experience. He explained that I would never be welcome in a mosque, even though he didn't think that was 'right.' He described stories of people on the bus or in tea shops explaining that if a Christian (for many Somalis all foreigners are assumed to be Christians- Ethiopians, Kenyans, white people) enters a mosque it will "crumble to the ground, or burn into flames." He said he knew this wouldn't happen, but many people feared it would. He, along with a few others, suggested I avoid the mosque.

I turned my focus, instead, to speaking with women in their homes about their relationship with Islam and with God. Additionally, in personal communication with Dr. Marja Tiilikainen (October 2014) from the University of Helsinki I was introduced to *sitaat*, where I subsequently learned about *siyaaro* (a form of annual pilgrimage), and gained knowledge of *faliye* (diviners).

Over the course of my PhD research I visited six different *faliye*. The *faliye* were located in Hargeisa, Arabsiyo, and Borama. I travelled to each *faliye* at least once and communicated by phone on several occasions with one of them, Sheikh Mohammed. I learned about the *dua istikhara* through small gatherings with several young women who I taught at FFU. The young women invited their friends from Quranic School to join the conversations.

Nearly all of my research about *faliye* and the *dua istikhara* was conducted in English, thus my use of the word "destiny," rather than the Somali and Arabic word "*qadar*". The use of English when researching *faliye* and the *dua istikhara* is through the preference of my

informants, who were university educated and fluent or near-fluent in English and preferred this medium to help me. Fayza Ahmed Warsame, a student, also conducted a term-long research project on love and held a mixed-gender university-wide discussion on love and destiny that I also participated in. The discussion used a mix of English and Somali, which my research assistant Cabdixakiim Cabdilahi Cumar helped transcribe and translate.

3.5 A note on harassment

The harassment I endured and observed for the entire 18 months in Hargeisa has created a lens through which I orient myself in this analysis and attempt to understand the intimate relationships women cultivate with(in) themselves, in and amongst other women, with the divine, and with their (future) husbands.

From my first day to my last day, my psychological state in Hargeisa was subject to severe fluctuations comprising of extreme highs and lows all in one day. The highs came from interactions with my close friends and informants, the lows most often came about during my physical journey to visit these friends and are rooted in various forms of harassment. The harassment I experienced was verbal and physical, and was not only located in 'hot spots' (the market, outside football pitches, near schools).

I was frequently verbally harassed by young men who used lewd and sometimes sexual language towards me. They were often verbally aggressive in their tone and it was not uncommon for them to follow me in their cars or on foot, making me feel physically vulnerable. One teenage boy in my neighbourhood frequently threw stones at me, escalating his aggression on two distinct occasions hitting me in the back with stones large enough to give me bruises, and another time throwing a large stone that hit me on the side of my head.

Young boys often threw small stones and blocked my path making it unable to safely pass. On several occasions groups of young boys encircled me making me feel unsafe, and I was aided by neighbourhood boys who beat them away with sticks. Other times I would be hit with small stones after I walked past a group of boys walking home from school.

Men who chewed *qaat* in street stalls often shouted non-sensical comments. Sometimes men that chewed would turn aggressive and approach me. I had men (and to a lesser extent women) shout at me to go home because they believed I was a Christian. One man in the market grabbed my wrist and warned me that he was 'coming to get me.' I was groped on the bus by a young man who denied it when my friend confronted him. Twice in the market I was robbed. The first time a thief tried to unzip my bag but I caught and hit him. The second time someone stole my camera from my lap while I sat in a café in the market. The market was also the site for the most sexually lewd harassment, where on one occasion men debated whether or not they would "fuck" me.

Although the experiences listed here do not exhaust the daily encounters which I define as harassment, I must also include key experiences of fear that impacted my sense of vulnerability and my mental state. Experiences of hearing drones circling overhead, and rumours of Al-Shabaab attacks were unsettling. There was frequent gunfire associated with land disputes. Student riots and street riots over clan disputes often turned violent and resulted in nearby gun fights and street brawls. And finally, an altercation between Ethiopian soldiers and a drunk driver outside my bedroom window cemented the underlying tensions within society that were carefully managed by the government, soldiers, and outsiders.

Perhaps I am sensitive to what I term 'harassment' because I am an outsider; I am tall, I am fair-skinned, I am not Muslim, I am relatively unaccustomed to layers and layers of clothing, and I am one of the few foreigners to walk about town and take the bus as my primary mode of transport. Perhaps my physicality as an 'oddy' made me more prone to social curiosity, which I sometimes interpreted to be harassment though it may not have been intended as such and yet was often mentally exhausting.

Despite my outsider status in society, lamenting about harassment with my close friends brought us closer together. They shared their stories of harassment, they counselled me with advice and guidance, and they often 'protected' me when we went to the market or just walked down the street. We (women) all experienced harassment; old and young, beautiful or not, married or single, and no matter what clothing was worn.

Throughout the continent, young people are often considered a class of persons who are vulnerable to a world of “violence, immorality, and exploitation” (Masquelier 2005a, 67). They are sometimes considered problematic and liminal beings who contain the “seeds of evil and sabotage” and their “nation’s hope of ‘sociomoral revision’ ” (ibid.). Although this section expresses deep frustration and mental and physical anguish at the hands of many young men, I am also well aware of the pressure young men face as formative experiences (schooling, wage labour) fail to create the fruitful imaginaries they hope for. My sympathies towards our (male) harassers extends to observing institutional failures in quality education and job creation (leading to boredom), as well as a resulting compassion for curiosity of the outside other. I appreciate I am not a ‘normal’ sight in Hargeisa, although my patience became worn when people still expressed shock and amazement at my ‘being’ after seeing me nearly every day for 18 months. I stick out, literally, I am a head taller than many people. As a white foreigner it was assumed I was wealthy, English speaking, and a Christian. For reasons beyond my comprehension, it was also assumed I was German (I am not, I am American)⁹⁴.

Although my friends and informants knew I was doing my PhD research, I was publicly known as a university teacher. Foreign teachers are allotted a certain amount of respect and status in society. It also provided me social protection under the reputation of the university president, not to mention a university security guard armed with an AK-47. When I eventually acquired the grant writing job at a local NGO, I was better able to answer questions of “what do you DO?” and “what do you DO on the days you don’t teach?” My social position was complicated, my physical presence was ‘odd,’ and I was an understandable object of curiosity for many people.

My sympathy for the problems boredom entails locally comes from my love and care for the university students I taught. I see them and I see how hard they work, I see them learning, and I hope they will find personal, professional and intellectual success. I also know that for many of them they will have difficulty getting a job and others may never get one. Jobs, as I’ve been told by many people, are usually offered to people based on clan and family. If the owner of a business is of one clan, the likelihood of someone outside that clan getting the job is slim. If the students I taught, who have all the potential in the world

⁹⁴ In 2010 an incident involving the sexual assault of several Somali women by a retired German NGO worker led to his deportation, as a result I interpreted the immediate assumption of my Germanness to be an assumption about my sexual depravity.

to be great, have difficulty getting jobs, I am sympathetic to the many other people I met who aren't so lucky as to have gone to university.

Amongst the social network I created (and possibly in some areas of Hargeisa) a university education is not unusual. Amongst the women I met knowledge is a prized value that one obtains through secular and Quranic schooling⁹⁵. However, many people in Hargeisa and Somaliland do not go to university. This is partly due to situational factors, and partly situated in a larger framework of gendered access to education in Sub-Saharan Africa⁹⁶. During the civil war the entire educational system collapsed, interrupting many people's education. Many of those working in government and involved in politics cite the war as one reason the higher education system is still in a state of rebuilding. They argue that in turn there are not enough jobs nor social outlets to meet the growing population of recent graduates, resulting in a lack of employment opportunities for graduates and a lack of leisure outlets.

But boredom and unemployment not only stem from a lack of university education, there just aren't many jobs to be had. It also doesn't help that the city, generally, closes between 12-4pm every day. This 'siesta' takes place for many reasons; the heat can be unbearable and the siesta falls around prayer times. People can pray, eat their lunch, nap, and wake up in time for the next call to prayer. Prayer times orient the daily lives of people, and in turn the chewing of *qaat*.

Qaat chewing peaks during several delivery times⁹⁷ throughout the day, often with people purchasing *qaat* for the 12-4 siesta. Many people chew in private, but in Hargeisa *qaat* stalls line the streets and provide a place for men to chew with their friends. There are many social and political arguments for and against *qaat* consumption, but in my experience it serves as a means for many men (and women) to pass time and socialize. It facilitates boredom, which often facilitates harassment.

⁹⁵ See Chapter 7 for more.

⁹⁶ See UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2010) for more on Sub-Saharan Africa tertiary education indicators; particularly pressure for expansion of tertiary education, resource constraints, gender parity, and international mobility.

⁹⁷ The *qaat* that is chewed in Somaliland is imported from Awade, Ethiopia.

Qaat is a stimulant, it makes people chatty, and it increases sexual desire (though not, I've been told, performance). In turn, *qaat* delivery times and *qaat* chewing hours, were when I was most harassed. My close friends and informants didn't explicitly stress this correlation, but they were sympathetic to my grievances. This is not to suggest that all men (or women) who chew *qaat* harassed me, it is simply to imply an observational correlation in my personal experiences of harassment. Many homes I visited served as chewing sites and I was greeted with warmth, and sometimes invited to join.

Boredom in Hargeisa is complex, it's not just about education, jobs and *qaat*. Boredom also involves a lack of space to release the tensions of life, and for youth, limited space to release energy. My most violent harassers were young people (teens through twenties). I felt I was reduced to an object, not an object of curiosity, but an object to relieve boredom and aggression. I had many wonderful experiences with young men and women, but I also received verbal and physical harassment from young people. I was often a target for young children to toss stones at, but sometimes older children and young people aggressively threw stones; sometimes to hurt me and sometimes to scare me. I eventually developed a phobia of small gangs of young people; if I saw a group of secondary school aged or university boys I panicked and would turn down a different road or even turn around. Often women or older men would help me, but it didn't feel like often enough.

My close friends and informants sympathized with me. They protected me when we went out together and gave me advice on how to deal with harassment. They shared their stories of harassment, the places they got harassed the most, and their coping mechanisms to deal with it. To my disappointment, harassment was a normal part of their lives to which they had adapted.

Harassment became a form of unwilling participant observation. Our shared experiences of harassment made us closer; it was something we experienced and reflected on together. This opened avenues to women collectively discussing their bodies, their dress, and the ways they perceive men who gaze at them. As a method, harassment also reversed the power in our relationships. It made me vulnerable and dependent at times. It also made me angry, it made me fierce, and it made me learn when to ignore it or when to fight against it. Women became my 'guides' as to how to carry myself, how to alter my dress, and how to balance the male gaze as both desirable and potentially dangerous. I

psychologically struggled (and still do) to find compassion for curiosity and boredom while also feeling myself change psychologically. Sometimes I no longer felt like I was 'me,' I was an object; an object of curiosity, an object of boredom, and often an object of the male gaze. I struggled to come to terms with this, to understand this. I still can't reconcile this. This profoundly shaped my experiences in Somaliland and in Hargeisa and altered my lens of analysis and my understanding of Somali women as the toughest and fiercest women I've ever met.

Chapter 4: The intimate relationship women have with their bodies

"Women die three times: first, when they are cut; second when they have sex on their wedding night, and third when they have a child."

Fowsia

I sat on the floor in Basr's house, on the flimsy mattress that the house girls sleep on each night. Basr arranged for me to sit with Fowsia, an old woman who lives on her own and often depends on Basr's generosity for tea, *qaat*, and the occasional \$10.

Fowsia is eccentric by Somali standards; she walks with a limp due to one leg being shorter than the other, she is missing several teeth. She is extremely loud- especially when she speaks on the phone because she holds her phone upside down and backwards, not actually speaking into the mouthpiece. She calls all the women in her life 'mama'- when she is high on *qaat* she repeatedly kisses the hands of the women sitting with her and says 'mama' over and over, she has divine spirits that help her read people's destiny, and she lives on her own most of the time, She has a daughter who sometimes stays with her but their relationship has a pattern of conflict, which often arises over the topics of *qaat*, prostitution, and spirits, and their relationship can sometimes be violent, like the time they had a knife fight that Basr and I broke up.

Fowsia sits with her thick legs stretched out in front of her, smoking a cigarette and chewing *qaat*, and occasionally taking loud sips of too sweet tea. I'm always slightly ill at ease with Fowsia but she never seems to notice. She kisses my hand over and over, calls me 'mama,' and asks if I want a cigarette, *qaat*, or tea. I refuse all three, preferring the less sweet tea that Basr has made specially for me, and take note that Fowsia is probably high from the *qaat*.

I unwrap my headscarf, remove my *shalmad*, and make myself comfortable. Basr knows that I want to talk to Fowsia about her FGC, so she kindly guides our conversation towards the topic. As the heat of the afternoon wanes Fowsia tells me about the day she was cut,

the birth of one of her children, her sexual dissatisfaction, and she comments on young girls today⁹⁸.

She begins by explaining that she grew up just outside Hargeisa before the war⁹⁹. She described a life of rural isolation, which is typical of villages outside of Hargeisa even today. She says she was cut when she was a young girl, she doesn't know when exactly but it's likely she was between six and eight years old. Although Fowsia is considered an old woman now she still remembers the day she was cut very clearly, and as she told me about that day her body language and her voice changed; suggesting a deep concentration in recalling something so intimate and painful that was so long ago, and a detachment from the visible trauma she experienced.

Fowsia was cut by a woman who stopped at her family's hamlet as she travelled the countryside cutting girls. Fowsia spoke of lying on her back and being held by her arms and her legs while the woman cut her clitoris first, then her inner labia, and finally her outer labia, all with a pair of scissors. She was then sewn with a long, sharp, thorn. I know of this thorn because I often get my dresses and scarves caught in its bush when the wind blows. It is about the length of my pinkie finger, the width of a straw, and can draw blood when it scratches you.

Fowsia was sewn from the 'top,' near the pubis, 'down,' towards her vaginal opening. The woman used a thread of plastic from a large grain sack; the kind flour and rice are sold from in the market. The woman left a small hole near the vagina, the size of a grain of rice, for Fowsia to urinate from and pass menstrual blood when she was older. Fowsia says her type of cutting is called Pharaonic, and clarifies that many girls today (suggesting urban girls) are cut according to what is called Sunna, this is commonly considered a lesser type of cutting and sewing.

She next describes the birth of one of her children, and begins by recalling she was on her back and being held down, much like when she was cut. A midwife held her arms while

⁹⁸ Fowsia's 'classification' of female genital cutting is what Somalis call *Pharaonic*, and is often referred to as FGM (female genital mutilation) by Somali women. Later in this chapter, I will clarify the classifications of female genital cutting, inconsistencies with this classification, and explain why I use the term 'cutting' as opposed to 'circumcision' or 'mutilation.'

⁹⁹ The war Fowsia is referencing is the civil war which grew out of the Barre regime's rule during the 1980s. Fowsia is considered an old woman and does not know when exactly she was born, but she was possibly in her 60s at the time of this research.

another woman tried to cut her scar tissue open with scissors. She said they cut when the baby is crowning and it is time to push it out. Fowsia kicked the woman with the scissors and refused to open her legs. She says more women came and held her legs so they could cut her open with small horizontal cuts on either side of her vaginal hole. The midwife then sat on her chest and pushed her stomach down, pushing the baby down and hopefully out. After the baby was born they sewed her back up, like she was before.

Fowsia pauses for a while, lights another cigarette and then tells me she has never experienced sexual pleasure from any of her husbands. She has been married several times, and is happy to be single now. She says she doesn't want to deal with men, they just give her trouble.

We refill our tea cups and the conversation moves to young girls today and their search for husbands. Fowsia and Basr have strong opinions about young women and marriage; I learn this is a conversation I will have over and over during the next year. They criticize young women walking the streets around sunset looking for "*calaaf iyo casho*," "love or dinner." They tell me some girls are so desperate to get married that they will hop into the car of any man who promises them dinner, sometimes finding themselves in dangerous situations. They criticize the way young girls dress- too attention grabbing! The amount and application of make-up- too much! And their use of skin whitening- too white! Basr looks towards the door to see who is near and then whispers that one of the girls who works for her, Arwala, wraps herself in plastic bags after applying whitening cream. She wraps her arms and her legs and sits in the sun for the chemical to soak in. Basr clicks her tongue in disapproval and says that's why Arwala is always scratching her skin and is growing hair on her face.

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As my friendships with Fowsia and Basr deepen over the next year I observe that many of the things they criticize young girls of doing in their search for love or a husband, they themselves also do but in their own ways. There are rumours that Fowsia sometimes sleeps with men for money, food, or *qaat*. For her this is survival, but for young girls this is shameful. Basr eventually divorced her husband, releasing herself from a tumultuous polygamous marriage, and draws on her beauty and sexuality to find success in her small business.

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After several hours of talking, sipping tea, and inhaling Fowsia's cigarette smoke- she managed to smoke an entire pack- the Maghreb (sunset) call to prayer sounds. I observe Fowsia's transformation- she puts out her cigarette, the ball of *qaat* in her mouth disappears, and she swishes her mouth with tea as part of make-do ablutions. She covers her hair, her neck, and her ears with a head scarf; she pulls a black *abaya* over her colourful *dirac*, and rummages through her handbag finding prayer beads. She is ready. She begins whispering her prayers, and I watch her transform as she prostrates herself towards Mecca.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is ultimately about women's bodies, specifically the ways in which Somali women modify their bodies 'inside' and 'outside' as part of a process of ethical self-cultivation. Modifying the body towards creating an ethical self involves work and discipline, both of which are integral to living an ethical life. In Chapter 1 I described ethics as a set of practices centred on the question of how one should live and what kind of person one should be (Keane 2017, 20). These practices include one's relations to others, and choosing about right and wrong acts. The sense of 'should' one feels directs much of my ethnographic analysis to values (*qiyam*), which influence how one should act. In other words, it is through consideration of the values that inform the ways women act on and through their bodies that moments of contestation, negotiation, and deliberation become illuminated. These moments show the skills and abilities women cultivate over the life of this world in order to work towards what they believe is their destiny: love (*cashaq*, *jacayl*), marriage (*nikah*, *aroos*), and children (*caruur*).

In what follows I describe the 'being' of life, where the journey of becoming is filled with potential and possibility that can only be realised in and through activities (Mattingly 2014b, 10). Activities, including actions that work on and discipline the body, imply taking initiative, the sense of a beginning, or setting something into motion (Arendt 1959, 177). As such, I consider the 'activities' of body modification to set something into motion, notably a process of self-understanding and self-knowledge, virtues necessary to know God and to achieve one's destiny. I understand knowledge to be a collection of skills and abilities a person has acquired through experience. A person's ability to apply that knowledge is a sign of intelligence.

Building on the Du Boisian notion of “twoness” and Fanon’s theory of consciousness this thesis seeks to explore the values that inform Somali women’s everyday lives, it seeks to put forth a theory of freedom founded on reflexive consciousness and a multiplicity of selves. The multiplicity, or entanglement (Mbembe 2001), of selves begins in this chapter’s analysis of the body, I argue that a multiplicity of selves is experienced as an inside and an outside, and as a first person self and a third person self. As such the cultivation of an ethical self is constituted both by the ways one conceives of the world and the ways in which the world conceives of them.

I begin by explaining what it is women are ‘working’ towards and how body modifications can help them achieve their destiny. Then, I ethnographically situate the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’ as places of work and discipline; engaging with theories of the body and piety (*cibbaado, dhowrsanaan, tuudis, baryo Alle*). Next, I critique notions of virtuous (*dhaqan wanaagsan* lit. good culture) discipline and introduce a feminist theory of freedom that will be built on throughout this thesis. Finally, I show how working on oneself is a means of knowing oneself, a necessary part of creating an intimate relationship with God and achieving one’s destiny. I conclude by describing how analysis of women’s bodies contributes to an understanding of three movements of entanglement in the life course – inward, outward, and upward.

4.2 Body work and discipline

Women work on and discipline themselves in order to achieve what they believe is their destiny, which nearly always includes love, marriage, and children amongst other hopes¹⁰⁰. Achieving love, marriage, and children as part of one’s destiny is at once an ideal, something hoped for, and part of one’s imagination; at the same time they are expected realities, they are absolutes to be worked towards, and to be prepared for. If one fails at love, marriage, or having children then such troubles can be considered a test of *dunya*, a test of the life of this world. Such tests are sent from God to see how one acts during moments of crisis and uncertainty. If one acts well or virtuously, one can achieve love, marriage, and children in the life of the other world. However, this chapter will focus on the body and achieving one’s destiny in the life of this world¹⁰¹.

¹⁰⁰ See Chapter 1 for more on destiny.

¹⁰¹ See Chapter 6 for analyses on the ways women work on their destiny in moments of crisis and uncertainty.

If women consider love, marriage, and children to be integral to what they believe is their destiny, then how does modifying the body help them achieve this? Body modifications occur throughout Somali women's lives, often beginning as young as infancy when a baby girl's clitoris is pressed by her mother to prevent it from growing "too big." Some modifications occur without consent, like FGC or without initial understanding like the first time young girls wear the hijab in public, both around age six to eight. Over time, as young women gain deeper knowledge about themselves and the world in which they live, FGC or choice of dress take on new meaning, and this meaning may deepen at certain points in the life course- perhaps after a young woman gets married- and it may wane at other points- like after menopause when most women are not viewed as fertile and sexually desirable. However, irrespective of whether the modification was chosen on behalf of a young girl or if a woman chooses it herself, bodily modifications, inside and out, have purpose and meaning. The purpose and meaning changes and evolves, but the ways in which a woman "shines" (*shidan*)¹⁰³ in society reflects her ethical self. Fashioning an ethical self in and through the body is not new¹⁰⁴; however for the Somali women I met to "take care of yourself" is to also "know yourself"¹⁰⁵ (see Foucault 1988 on self care) and to "know God." In other words, to modify one's body is a form of care founded on working on and disciplining the body, inside and out. A woman must work on creating what Muhammed

¹⁰³ "Shine" and "shining" are often used, in English, to indicate that a person looks "good" or "beautiful." The word for beautiful, *qurux*, is not the same as shining. To shine is the same as to beautify oneself, to look good or beautiful. Shining is an active verb indicating that a woman had an active part in the *doing*, whereas beautiful does not imply going out of one's way to look or behave a certain way. 'Shinning' was used in *Qoys Kaab* lectures and by young women, primarily in English but also in Somali slang '*shidan*'. I was often told I was 'shinning' when men and women thought I looked beautiful. Muhammed's *Qoys Kaab* lecture showed how 'beauty' has been taken and turned it into something that you make or un-make, something that you actively do; you shine. To shine and beautify oneself are not synonyms, because shining can mean you project different characteristics, including intelligence, sexiness, humility; not just physical attributes. Shinning is an umbrella word for all the different things you project, but Muhammed warns not to over project, nor to under project. From here on out I will use the English word 'shinning', although the meaning and implications are the same with the Somali word '*shidan*'.

¹⁰⁴ For example, Jackson's phrase "body forth the world" (1989, 236) means "we bring forth worlds, or make our lives meaningful, not only with language, and work, but also in and on our very bodies" (Popenoe 2004, 136). In other words, we make meaning in and on our bodies; it is through our bodies that the world comes into being. This echoes Merleau-Ponty's (1945) theory of phenomenology that the flesh is the nexus of social relations.

¹⁰⁵ In the case of Somali women I theorise that to "take care of yourself" is a means to "know thyself," and as one gets to "know thyself" over the life course it will impact how one "takes care of oneself." They are in a dialectical relationship which evolves in and through time. This is in contrast to Foucault's analysis of the Greco-Roman tradition where "knowledge of oneself appeared as the consequence of taking care of yourself," and his argument that in the modern world "knowledge of oneself constitutes the fundamental principle" (1988, 22). Instead for Somali women I suggest that there is no "hierarchy" of these two principles, rather the paramount principle is "knowing God".

from *Qoys Kaab* Islamic family and marriage classes¹⁰⁶ calls a “shining” self, but she must also discipline herself not to “shine” too much. In “shining” just the right amount women will be able to attract a loving husband, to whom they can give what Nada and Maria from *Qoys Kaab*¹⁰⁷ call their “diamond¹⁰⁸,” or the gift of a woman’s body symbolized by giving her virginity on the wedding night.

Taking care of oneself and knowing oneself are virtues women enact in the process of ethical self-cultivation (Foucault 1991); however these virtues are considered part of “knowing God,” and are integral to women’s relationship with God. In other words, women enact virtue in, on, and through their bodies to create ethical subjectivity and to begin to develop a sense of self with and through God’s guidance. For example a mother may have her daughter cut at age six. The daughter may not want to be cut; she certainly does not understand why she is being cut. It is only as she grows older that she will implicitly and explicitly learn the values that inform the practice of FGC. For example, she will come to understand the virtue of purity as she develops an interest in her male classmates. She will come to understand the pain of her monthly menstruation as a virtue she must endure for her purity. She may question the ways that the virtues of purity and pain are enacted on and through her body leading up to her wedding night, forcing her to question how she may cut her daughter in the future. In the process of caring for herself, like managing her menstrual pain, or requesting for a doctor to cut her Pharaonic circumcision before the wedding night she is also getting to know herself. She is learning the values of purity and pain, and she is also learning how she wants to enact these values in a meaningful and ‘correct’ way (Deeb 2006; Kapteijns 2009). Caring for oneself and knowing oneself are part of a process of knowing God; or, “knowing yourself brings you closer to God” as my friend Hibaaq stated. What she meant is: how can you know when

¹⁰⁶ *Qoys Kaab* classes prepare urban, middle to upper class, educated women for marriage and family life. Students are between the ages of 15-25 (although I exceeded the age limit at 30 they still let me attend), and must be unmarried. The classes are only taught in Hargiesa and began in 2014. They The classes teach practical skills and abilities, as well as the implicit and explicit teaching of virtues needed to have a happy marriage and family. For more see Chapters 5 and 7.

¹⁰⁷ Nada and Maria gave a *Qoys Kaab* lecture on what to expect on our wedding night, including the moment when we “give our husbands our diamond”.

¹⁰⁸ “Diamond” was used metaphorically in several *Qoys Kaab* lectures to indicate the gift of a woman’s body, specifically her virginity on the wedding night. At times, including in the lecture titled *Keep Calm and Keep Your Virginity* by a midwifery student and the lecture on women’s bodies and health by Dr. Shukri, “diamond” also referred specifically to the vulva; however my informants (*Qoys Kaab* students and non-*Qoys Kaab* students) understood the vulva and the vagina to be synonymous. As such, I will follow the lexicon of my informants by writing “vagina” although they are referring to the vulva.

God is sending you a sign, through prayer, or a feeling directing you towards your destiny if you don't know yourself well enough to identify it? For example, if you have a feeling about your classmate as a potential husband, you must know yourself well enough to identify if it is a feeling of lust or love. If one has cultivated an understanding of the values that inform society, then one will be able to differentiate between the temptation of lust and the God sent feeling of love. Thus, caring for oneself and knowing oneself are all in service of creating an ethical self that is necessary to know God.

The concept of caring for oneself and knowing oneself through work and discipline of the body towards an ethical self (Mahmood 2001; 2012), and towards one's destiny is not necessarily new (Elliot 2016; Popenoe 2004). Popenoe writes about fattening practices amongst the Azawagh Arabs in Niger as a means of working on and disciplining the female body to differentiate it from the male body. Older women force feed young women in fattening huts as they prepare for marriage. Young women eat "hot" foods that will make them not only fat but also fertile, suggesting that fattening is not only a beauty practice but also a health practice. They believe that the warmer a woman's body, as related to food and fat, the more fertile she will become. Thus, when a woman is fat her body is not only sexually desirable, but it also symbolizes her fertility and viability for marriage. Her fat body is a symbol of health and beauty, showing that force feeding is a means of working on and disciplining young women's bodies.

Popenoe grounds her ethnography in her informants' cultural environment, which is "inescapably anchored in the direction of Allah's world" (2004, 154). She writes that Islam, "understands men and women to be profoundly different types of beings," and Islam "believes that men and women should fulfil each other sexually, and women should especially provide for male pleasure," and finally that Islam "holds that it is women's God-given destiny to bear future Muslims" (71). Through the process of fattening Azawagh women cultivate sexual difference between men and women, while at the same time sparking male desire and providing sexual satisfaction, and in turn achieving their most "noble" purpose of bearing children. Through fattening, young women are able to embrace their destiny and purpose.

Although Popenoe's ethnographic work is compelling, particularly her analysis of the ways in which the body is gendered and differentiated from men's (see Boddy 1982 on Sudan),

and notions of bodily well-being through a classification system of hot and cold (see Boddy 1989 on Sudan; Randall 1993 on the Tamasheq)¹⁰⁹, I argue that, at times, she oversimplifies the “sensuous, sexual...fattened female body” and its relationship to Islam. Her ethnography illuminates the tactics sometimes used to force young girls to eat- by pinching, bending back fingers, throwing household items- but it does not explore what happens if fattening fails; not the actual gaining of fat but if a young girl fails to become sensuous and sexual, if she fails to become a warm and fertile body, if she fails to have any children, and in turn if she fails to fulfil her destiny. I build on Popenoe’s analysis of women’s bodies by including Somali case studies of struggle, failure, and conflict. I analyse such ethnographic moments to show that the path to destiny is not straight forward, that women may desire many (potentially incompatible) goals as part of their destiny, and they may not always know what they are working towards¹¹⁰ (Schielke 2009, 164).

Elliot (2016) also considers the ways that women work on their body towards what they believe to be their destiny. She focuses on the intimate and everyday actions of young women in Morocco, who express that they “always have to be ready for God” (488). Elliot writes that young Moroccan women cultivate physical beauty to make themselves “‘ready and prepared’ for a destined man’s gaze” (491). Beauty for Elliot’s informants, much like Popenoe’s, is understood as a necessity and a duty that requires specific skill and ability. Beauty must be “balanced” so young women aren’t looked at for the “wrong reasons” (491), rather a young woman desires to exhibit beauty through make-up, posture, and style that will potentially get her noticed, start a conversation, and maybe lead to a romantic relationship.

¹⁰⁹ The Azawagh classification system of hot and cold is not far removed from the Hofriyati notion of closure that Boddy (1989) writes about. For the Hofriyati a closed body, or a body that has undergone Pharaonic circumcision, is only opened for reproductive purposes and stands for the closed nature of village life and thus the determination of a woman’s self-hood (252). As such, a woman can experience a non-self through spirit possession where a once infertile woman may become fertile (255). Thus the opening and closing of the body is also an opening and closing of the self, suggesting an inside and outside that can be transgressed through spirit possession. See also Randall (1993) for the Tamasheq hot-cold classification of health and illness as based on symptoms associated with the presence or absence of blood or water.

¹¹⁰ I am specifically referencing Schielke’s work on moral ambivalence. He writes that his informants in Cairo did not always know what they wanted, that they found different ways of “being good” according to different moral aims. I am not suggesting they lived life according to an unconscious habituation, rather that there is a plurality of “goods” and a plurality of ways of understanding what makes something “good” or “bad”. This serves as a critique of the ‘flattening’ of the values that inform Islamic piety. I expand on this throughout the thesis.

Elliot's analysis is useful in highlighting a theoretical tension my Somali informants face, that of shining. Somali women must "balance" their beauty by simultaneously being "ready" for a man's gaze and exhibiting modesty (*degganaan*); they must shine enough to be noticed, but not too much to be misinterpreted as flirtatious or decorous. This balance in the ways one presents oneself illuminates a tension in values, or what Schielke calls "idealized oppositions" (2009, 161; 2010, 12). Schielke specifically refers to the idealised oppositions of revivalist piety and liberal secularism, arguing that "most people adhere to something of both (and something of many other things as well), to different degrees at different times" (2010, 12). I draw on the concept of idealised oppositions to suggest that young Somali women oscillate between shining too much, and not shining enough. This is a balance that requires skills and abilities that are learned in *Qoys Kaab* classes, through friends, TV, social media, female family members, and trial and error. This pressure for Somali women to be many things at once represents different moral (*akhlaaq*) aims that women must balance in, on, and through their bodies. This is not new for Somali women. Warsame (2002) writing on women's traditional roles within pastoralist Somaliland communities argues that women face a paradox in society. She argues that women had a perceived lower status but they were also looked upon as important. Warsame writes that this is the result of the socialization process:

"Girls are socialized to be weak and docile while at the same time they are taught to be strong and smart. Women are told that they hold the strings of the society and that without them life would be a misery. But also, girls and women are led to believe that they are the inferior sex and they are there merely to serve men and should not hold positions viewed as important" (30).

Warsame shows that women are socialized to embody this idealized opposition. This does not suggest they get it 'right' all the time or that the ideal is a static concept; rather this contradiction is encountered in many aspects of women's daily lives, including the ways they modify their bodies. Women are faced with numerous demands and expectations, and their bodies become spaces of active deliberation where these contradictions become visible.

One emotive type of body modification that illuminates the contradictions women embody, as well as the notion of idealized opposition is FGC. After being cut, not only are

women expected to be sexually pure and chaste, they are also expected to be sexually desirable. They become a symbol of heightened sexuality, and a sexuality that is in need of control and discipline; logical contradictions. One young male doctor explained to me that when women aren't cut they have an excess of energy and grow fatter and taller than girls who are cut. He suggested that when girls are cut their energy is focused and controlled.

In addition to this contradiction, FGC illuminates competing and contradictory values (Dumont 1986; Robbins 2004, 2007a). Women consider and negotiate international, religious, health, and gendered values as related to their bodies and their daughters and granddaughters bodies. For example, the *qabiil*¹¹² (clan) system of government (established in 1993) is heavily influenced by the international community, including iNGOs. The government, in conjunction with large funding bodies like the UN, erect billboards and hold workshops condemning "FGM." The parallel, "traditional," *guurti* or council of elders is heavily influenced by prominent Somali sheikhs and elders, and also openly condemn "FGM." However, in negotiating these influences there is a slippage in language (see also Veststad 2014) that prohibits these two parallel systems of government from speaking to each other about FGC. This results in conflicted and competing moral messages on cutting. The government and iNGOs consider FGM¹¹³ to be any cutting, pricking, or modification of the female genitalia, whereas the *guurti* and religious leaders consider FGM to only be Pharaonic¹¹⁴. Many women described their Pharaonic as a hole the size of a grain of rice through which to pass urine and menstrual blood. The explained it takes a long time to relieve their bladders and many developed urinary tract infections as a result of these difficulties. Women also had difficulty passing menstrual blood, some reported large clots

¹¹² Also, tribe, race, nation.

¹¹³ Female genital mutilation is generally understood by the international community to comprise all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons (WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, 1997).

¹¹⁴ "Pharaonic circumcision" is a term widely employed in the literature and by Somalis themselves. It is believed the custom dates to the time of the Pharaonic Egyptians; however this is debatable (Boddy 1982). Many Somalis believe that Pharaonic is prescribed in the Quran (see hadith narrated by al-Bukhaari [5889] and Muslim [257], Muslim [349], Abu Dawood [5271], *Fath al-Baari*, 10/340; *Kishshaaf al-Qinaa'*, 1/80, *Mawaahib al-Jaleel*, 3/259, *al-Tamheed*, 21/60; *al-Mughni*, 1/63, *Fataawa al-Lajnah al-Daa'imah* (5/223); see fatwas issued by Shaykh Jaad al-Haqq 'Ali Jaad al-Haqq, Shaykh 'Atiyah Saqar, *Dar al-Ifta' al-Misriyyah* (6/1986) (al-Munajjid, 2005)). Another phrase used in reference to this procedure is "infibulation." According to my informants Pharaonic circumcision involves the cutting and removal of the inner and outer labia. It sometimes involves the removal of the clitoris, sometimes just the clitoral hood. The remaining skin is then sutured from the pubis towards the perineum, leaving a small hole (described by many friends as the size of a grain of rice or shown using their hands with their pinky fingernail) in the vulva to pass menstrual blood and urine.

that eventually had to be surgically removed, and others described frequent infections from trapped menstrual blood and clots. I was told that menstruation is extremely painful and often witnessed my friends crying in bed for several days with pain.

The *guurti* and religious elders consider Sunna to be obligatory. However, for my informants there was much variation in their descriptions of Sunna circumcision, although it is widely employed in academic literature and by Somalis. For some Sunna involves just the cutting of the clitoral hood, for others it's a complete removal of the clitoris. After the clitoris or hood is removed it was described that three to six stitches are made from the pubis towards the perineum, and meant to cover the area cut. Some women reported being told they were given Sunna by their mothers and grandmothers to later learn they actually had Pharaonic.

As a result of the belief of the *guurti* and the religious elders that Sunna is obligatory, women receive messages from the 'modern' and 'intelligent' international community about the damaging and "backwards" (see Carson 2016 for interview with prominent Somali anti-FGM campaigner Edna Adan) practice of any type of cutting. At the same time, they receive messages from the 'traditional' Somali Islamic authorities about the importance of continuing Sunna. These parallel messages create an idealized opposition involving recognized forms of knowledge and reasoning: Islamic knowledge and Quranic reasoning stand in opposition to biomedical knowledge and human rights reasoning; however, both sources of knowledge and lines of reasoning can end in a type of human flourishing¹¹⁶.

¹¹⁶Much has been written about female genital cutting, and this chapter intends to problematise many representations and moral evaluations by foregrounding women's descriptions of FGC over the life course. Some focus their writing on descriptions of the "pain," "suffering," and "sorrow" of female circumcision (Abdalla 2006) framed within a larger discussion of sexual violence and rape inflicted during the civil war in the 1980s (Gardner and El-Bushra 2004), while others take a strong political stance as anti-FGM campaigners (e.g. Edna Adan, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Nimco Ali, and Layla Hussein). Some write about the moral debates surrounding genital cutting (Shweder 2000) including (lack of) ritual (Hernlund 2000) and socio-historical beliefs (Hicks 1996; Van Der Kwaak 1992), while others write from their own experiences (Ahmadu 2000, Ali 2007, Dirie 1998). Boddy (1982, 1989) provides symbolic and ethnographic contextualisation of FGC through insight into women's moral worlds, and most recently (2016) challenges 'outsider' moral condemnation of the practice by drawing parallels with labiaplasty (see also Giusy et al. 2015). Beyond these perspectives other writers foreground the misalignment between international definitions of FGM and individual women's experiences (Conroy 2006, Veststad 2014). Others examine health implications, prevalence rates and change in practice (Gruenbaum 2013; Obermeyer 1999; Shell-Duncan 2001; Shell-Duncan and Hernlund 2000), including diaspora experiences (Jinnah 2015; Johansen 2016).

Embodying such contradictions and negotiating value oppositions in everyday life demands the cultivation of specific skills and abilities. These are implicitly and explicitly learned over the life course, and one's knowledge and understanding of them improves over time. For example, Elliot's informants require the skill and ability to not only create a beautiful exterior, but to also recognize a potential future husband. For my informants, it was important to not only create a beautiful (*qurux*) yet modest (*deggan*) exterior, it was also necessary to know one's self. Knowing one's self requires intelligence, to apply one's skills and abilities, confidence and personality; and through knowing oneself a woman can better recognize a potential future husband because she is closer to God. Having strong knowledge of one's self means that one is better able to understand and interpret God's signs¹¹⁷, one has cultivated the skills and abilities needed to know God. God sends signs through dreams, feelings, and divination (although that is contested, see Chapter 6 for more). Thus, when a woman misreads one of God's signs- say between the feelings of love and lust- this does not mean that her intention was misplaced, rather she needs to deepen her self-knowledge and in turn her relationship with God.

Reading signs from God takes practice, and that includes the potential for failure. Fowsia's failed marriages, mentioned in the opening vignette, show how life experience and the cultivation of specific skills and abilities through self-knowledge bring one closer to God and can bring a more hopeful future. Fowsia faced many difficulties after the breakdown of her marriages, so much so that she was living in a refugee camp¹¹⁸ when I first met her. However, over the course of the year and half that I was conducting my PhD fieldwork I observed Fowsia turn to her skill of divination and her relationship with the world of spirits (*ruux*, *rooxan*)¹¹⁹ for personal guidance and to help her friends.

Although divination and the spirit world are well known in Somali society and in Islam it is generally considered 'wrong' to engage with them by many Somalis. This put Fowsia in what many would consider a position of contradiction: she actively believed and engaged

¹¹⁷ Elliot's (2016) informants consider failed encounters with potential husbands are not a failure of their intention but are a result of failing to read "God's signs" (495).

¹¹⁸ Fowsia is not a refugee but her daughter is on the waitlist for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and was given a temporary home in a camp. People in the camp can be on the waitlist for years, even decades.

¹¹⁹ Her abilities of divination and communicating with spirits was inherited through her matrilineal line (her daughter has also inherited this ability). She learned how to harness this ability by learning and listening to the spirit's demands. For more on learning divination, and divination as a means of coming closer to and knowing God see Chapter 6.

with divination and spirits, and she lived what she considered to be a pious life by praying *salat (tukasho)*, dressing appropriately, and doing ‘good’. Fowsia did not see this as a contradiction, for her it was a negotiation of how she would ‘correctly’ enact the value of spirituality. She could work on her ‘insides’ by creating greater spiritual knowledge that brought her closer to God. She could apply her spiritual knowledge outside by manipulating her armour, for example by covering her hair and wearing an *abaya* thus creating an outward pious disposition. It is Fowsia’s skill and ability to negotiate how she will enact her spirituality that brought her closer to God, and allowed her to understand and interpret His signs.

Although, in the life of this world, Fowsia would be considered too old for love and marriage her destiny extends into the life of the other world, where love and marriage are attainable, hoped for, and worked towards. Thus, Fowsia wasn’t necessarily preoccupied with her beauty in the same ways a younger woman might be, instead she worked on creating a pious disposition, a modest demeanor, and used her skill of divination to help friends get closer to God. In other words she drew on modes of outward body modification, and cultivated inner knowledge and confidence through her divination skills.

Fowsia can communicate directly with “eavesdropping” spirits that know God’s plan for a person, and in turn know a person’s destiny. She had accumulated 150 spirits over her lifetime that moved with her (geographically) and served to guide her choices as well as the choices of others’. She connected with the spirits by reaching *jibbo*, or a state of religious ecstasy, attained (for her) by chewing *qaat*¹²⁰. One particular evening that Fowsia reached a state of *jibbo* she decided to engage her spirits in a spirit battle with Basr’s ex-boyfriend’s “evil spirits” who were bothering Basr, making her physically sick, and who appeared in Fowsia’s evening of religious ecstasy. According to Fowsia’s retelling of events, after a lengthy battle of several hours her spirits defeated the evil spirits. It was confirmed by Basr that the evil spirits had left her when both Basr and Fowsia fell ill with the flu due to exhaustion from the battle.

It could be interpreted that in her near God(ly) state Fowsia was guided towards the ‘right’ choice by entering the battle; not only did she win the battle and protect Basr, she also

¹²⁰ I also observed women, including Fowsia, reach *jibbo* by participating in *sitaat* gatherings. See Chapter 5 for more.

showed command of skills and abilities cultivated over a lifetime. Fowsia risked personal spiritual defeat and potential failure in reading signs from God (in whether to enter the battle or not). In her success Fowsia not only gained further confidence in her spiritual abilities, she also worked on her destiny. Fowsia, considered too old for love in the life of this world, not only ‘acted well’ by helping Basr¹²¹ and getting closer to God through her spirituality, she ended up deepening her friendship with Basr. Basr grew to trust Fowsia and provided regular companionship, food, tea, *qaat* and money. Thus, the love that Fowsia failed at in her marriages, it could be argued she gained through her friendship with Basr. In this different but equally important relationship Fowsia was able to gain many of the desirable outcomes of a marriage: housing, clothes, food, and companionship. As such, Fowsia illuminates the specific ways that women not only work on their insides but also the ways that women at different ‘phases’ in their destiny still manage to work on their destiny.

4.3 The ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’

Somali women modify their ‘insides’ and ‘outsides.’ The inside and outside are not separate entities like theories of Cartesian Dualism may suggest¹²² (for critiques of Cartesian Dualism see Merleau-Ponty 1945; Strathern, 1996). Instead I argue that for Somali women the inside and outside inform each other, in other words a woman is an ethical being in the ways she experiences the world and at the same time the way the world conceives of her. One’s insides shine outward, and simultaneously, one’s outsides reflect inward. This shining is contested and balanced on and through a woman’s armour, or choice of dress, which serves as a moral border zone between the inside and outside.

I theorise the body as inside and outside based on participant observation of beauty practices, listening to women’s experiences with FGC, through my personal transformation in the way that I conceived of my body, and by attending *Qoys Kaab* lessons. I became very conscious of my body and other people’s bodies. This became most self-evident during interactions with other foreigners or Somali diaspora (especially women) who, at the time, I became critical of for not wearing or tying the hijab “properly,” for wearing form-fitting clothing, or for smoking in public. At the same time I found myself becoming proud when women complimented me for “acting like a Muslim” even though, as they

¹²¹ Thus helping her enter paradise on Judgement Day (necessary for achieving one’s destiny)

¹²² In Cartesian Dualism the mind and body are separate entities, and as such one could possibly wrongly conceive of mind:inside and body:outside.

acknowledged, I was not a Muslim. My behaviour and dress separated me from other foreigners, according to my friends, and led many people to believe that I was considering converting to Islam (which I explained that I was interested in learning about, but not converting to).

At *Qoys Kaab* we were explicitly taught, through a variety of lessons, about our bodies. I studiously listened to lectures on the dangers of skin whitening, women's health, FGC, the importance of keeping our virginity, what to expect on our wedding night, and how to make ourselves beautiful for our husbands. While other lectures coached us on personality development, cultivating confidence, and the importance of intelligence and knowledge. *Qoys Kaab* classes, in addition to generational knowledge, the TV, internet, social media, friends and family abroad, and female friends imbue women with the practical skills and abilities needed to work on and discipline their bodies. Such skills and abilities are what Aristotle would call *techne* referring to a practice or craft that requires knowledge. It is a learned disposition based on practical activity and is considered distinct from virtue, which is a disposition for acting (2009). Activities "that involve skill, calculation about the best means to achieve given ends, and the mastery of skills-including social skills-to bring about a desired result" (Mattingly 2014b, 64).

One technical *Qoys Kaab* lecture on women's health by Dr. Shukri, a Hargeisa based women's health doctor and obstetrician / gynaecologist, described the physical differences between men and women, including gendered experiences of health. She explained that, although, there are some health problems that affect men and women, women "have more difficulty" dealing with them. This is because women experience "menstruation, pregnancy, and menopause," and during each of these phases a woman's life will "change totally." This sense of totality includes hormonal changes causing women to be more likely to experience depression, as well as urinary tract infections, and sexually transmitted diseases.

Women tend to deal with changes differently than men as well. Dr. Shukri explained that older women often complain "we are sick, we are sick" (usually due to osteoarthritis), yet unlike men, they stay at home when they have pain. Men, in contrast, are able to work through pain implying that they are stronger and more able to discipline themselves. In old age men's pain becomes a virtue that must be conquered and distinguishes them from

older women. This gendered experience of pain differs from that of earlier in the life course, where women must cultivate the skills to identify good and bad pain during menstruation.

Experiences of 'normal' menstruation were discussed in the question and answer session after Dr. Shukri's lecture. Menstruation was the topic most of the students were interested in presumably because, as women pre-marriage, this was the 'life change' they had most experience of, and it was easier to ask about what they knew than the future changes they have yet to experience. One young woman asked "How much pain?" meaning *how much pain is okay when menstruating?* Dr. Shukri answered that "a little pain is normal" but "FGM" causes more pain, "if you have to stop your job, it's not normal, but for Somali girls it is normal because we have FGM." She continued, "I have never seen a Somali woman with a labia minora, but we don't need to cut. If they [women] know the benefit of having it [labia minora] when married they may not cut [their daughters]...Pharaonic FGM threatens elasticity of the vagina. Your vagina will be hidden and the hymen won't let your menstruation to come out." Causes of stress, like exams, give lots of pain during menstruation.

Dr. Shukri's answer that some menstrual pain is normal, but that Somali girls with FGM have a bad type of pain indirectly suggests that Pharaonic is bad for women's health, and that this pain should not be tolerated. This bad pain can lead to problems with pregnancy and child birth, potentially impacting our destiny; "there is a destiny but we must make a preparation." In other words, the body is, and can be, a tool for one's destiny; by working on one's physical body a woman is better able prepare it for future realities like children. Cultivating one's insides through self-knowledge to identify 'good' and 'bad' pain, as well as deliberating the values that inform modifications show the ways that women can work on the body to create ethical selves.

The ways in which Somali women conceive of the body as having an inside and an outside is not necessarily new, or nor is the concept of a 'border' through which the insides and outsides inform each other; however, the relationship between the inside and outside has immense ethnographic variation (see Cook 2007). For example, writing about Polynesian tattooing Gell (1993) states that the "technical schema¹²⁷" of tattooing is a process in which

¹²⁷ The puncturing, cutting, and piercing; the blood and the pain; and the healing and closure.

“an inside which comes from the outside...the exteriorization of the interior which is simultaneously the interiorization of the exterior” (39). For Marilyn Strathern (1979), writing on the Hagen of Papua New Guinea, the “inner self is visible only to the extent that it makes invisible the outer body” (249). For the Hagen the inner self is hidden “within the skin” and appears through decorating the body, when the inside is brought outside. Susan Benson (1997), comparing anorexia and bulimia with body building, shows that in the Euro-American context the outer body is disciplined in the interests of beauty, whether masculine or feminine. Simultaneously, the inner body is closed and bounded through “fantasies of autonomy and control”, and as such “the gaze of the world confirms what these sealed bodies mean” (160).

The “gaze of the world,” as part of the theorization of the exterior plays an important role in each ethnographic variation; the exterior reflects inward, and the inside shines outward. For Somali women the exterior reflects one’s inner piety, the inner ethical self. And, the interior shines outwards through choice of dress, make-up, and posture. And, I argue that a woman’s armour, or clothing, acts as a moral border zone¹²⁸ (Benson 2000; Mattingly 2010, 2014b), where piety is enacted, signaling a young woman’s virtue; where her marriage capacity is enacted, signaling her potential sexual desirability. Thus, armour is a place of both pious virtue and a place of sexual fertility; it is a site of multiple moral contestations and deliberations between the inside and the outside.

The metaphor of shining to show the contestation and deliberation between the inside and the outside was most explicit during Muhammed’s *Qoys Kaab* lecture titled ‘*Horumarinta Shakhsiyadda*’, or ‘Personality Development’. Muhammed, a recent graduate from the University of Hargeisa, explained that “personality development is my [Muhammed’s] hobby,” and when he isn’t indulging in his hobby he is a secondary school teacher. He explained that he enjoys reading self-help books, indicating that his theory and advice on personality development is primarily self-taught. His introduction made me question his authority on this topic, and why the *Qoys Kaab* students, who are educated women, would listen to him. I don’t necessarily have an answer for this, but I surmise it is partially because he could be considered a confident, good looking, and pious young man. He could

¹²⁸ Benson (2000) refers to the skin as a border zone between “the bounded self and the social world,” suggesting an ethnographic and theoretical variation of phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty 1945). Mattingly (2010, 2014b) refers to the hospital waiting room as a moral border zone, where the clinic transforms into multiple sites of moral contestation and deliberation.

be the 'type' of man many young women would like to eventually marry; thus his descriptions of how a woman 'should be' perhaps indicate more than just theories of personality development, they may be descriptions of what young men, like himself, look for in a woman.

He began his lecture describing what a personality is, "a person's character, public image, behavior and attitude;" then he explained that personality development is "improving one's attitude and behavior. It's a process that makes you smart and gives you confidence. It includes employment skills, increased consciousness, and building wealth- all part of reaching your full potential." The areas of personality development he identified are the "mind, body, and spirit." He then gave us the "top 10" most important aspects of personality development; including "be confident" and "be yourself." He followed these with "check your attire" explaining that "women give more attention to their attire, but don't shine [too much]. Body covering, [and] clean dress are recommended." He gave us the example of wearing a black *jilbab*, but choosing one that doesn't have jewels on it. He emphasized cleanliness in regards to hygiene and dress. We should "work on our body language," "be a little fun," "be a good listener" specifically "listening to your husband," and at the same time we should "have an opinion," "be positive," and "know yourself."

Many of Muhammed's suggestions were contradictory; a woman must be a good listener to her husband but also a little fun and with an opinion. One must be oneself, but also check how one expresses that in attire and body language. A woman can be a little fun by shining with her make-up, but she must discipline that shine by checking her attire and posture. A woman can gain confidence through learning "employment skills" but she must also know herself, which includes knowing one's weaknesses. From Muhammed's lecture it becomes evident that a woman can balance these contradictions through what she wears; thus clothing acts as a moral border zone. Choice of clothing becomes a form of "practical activity that involves skill, calculation about the best means to achieve given ends, and the mastery of skills- including social skills- to bring about desired results¹²⁹" (Mattingly 2014b, 64).

¹²⁹ If the skin is a moral border zone, a site of practical action, then such actions can be moral based on one's disposition in said actions. In other words, if one acts virtuously (according to 'correct' notions of Islam) when modifying their insides and outsides then one undergoes a process of ethical self-cultivation.

Conceiving of the body as a circulation of insides and outsides with clothing as a moral border zone presumes a dialectical relationship between a first-person self and third person 'other.' Or put another way, one is an ethical being through the ways one conceives of the world and the world conceives of them. I have shown that, ethnographically, this is not necessarily a new way of conceiving of the body, but in what follows I argue that what distinguishes this theory about Somali women's phenomenological experiences from the Polynesian and Euro-American examples, is a modern instantiation of the postcolonial concepts of double consciousness and objectification. I suggest that because women are constantly aware of their bodies through the gaze of others that a self in the third person exists in women's consciousness; thus facilitating the dialectical relationship between their insides and the outsides. In what follows I contextualize consciousness and objectification in postcolonial theory, then relate it to the fantasy and fetishisation of women's bodies, and conclude by arguing that working on and disciplining the body, for Somali women, is a process of conscious engagement.

4.4 Double consciousness and objectification as first person and third person perspectives

Double consciousness is a postcolonial theory first introduced by W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) referencing an inward "twoness," or a cultural construct of a self, predicated on "looking at one's self through the eyes of others" (38). Double consciousness has been extensively discussed in postcolonial literature¹³⁰ (Cesaire 1998; Fanon 2001, 2008; Hall 1997, 1998; Mbembe 1992, 2001, 2012; Said 1980), and it has been specifically applied to analysis of women and their bodies¹³¹. According to Du Bois man has a double identity predicated on being both a "Negro" and an American; to be a "Negro" is to be black and associated with African cultural heritage, and to be American is to be a Black person in one's skin colour but who mentally identifies with White people and European culture. For Fanon (2008), who builds on Du Bois' notion, man is at once black and not-white; man is only himself because he is not the other, and thus has a false sense of self¹³². This creates a feeling of alienation

¹³⁰ Here I can only cite postcolonial literature translated into or written in English. There is an abundance of postcolonial philosophy and theory relevant to this discussion that I am limited to accessing due to language barriers. For more on decolonization of language and African philosophy see Rettova 2017.

¹³¹ For example, writings on the life of Sarah 'Saartjie' Baartman (Crais and Scully 2009; Hall 1997).

¹³² Hall (1998) also builds on a notion of double consciousness in the diaspora.

which can be overcome through a form of conscious reflection in which one conceives of a set of values that do not need to be filtered through hegemonic norms and values.

If the self is multiple, in this case an inside and an outside, then the “gaze of the world” is predicated on a process of Othering¹³³. Somali women undergo a process of Othering through body modifications that create and reinforce their gender and their sexuality. For example they undergo FGC as a process of separating them from men and of becoming feminised (prioritising the values of piety, purity, cleanliness, and control). This process of gendering through bodily modifications is similar to arguments made by Boddy (1982, 1989) and Popenoe (2004); however, in addition to creating a sense of self that is predicated on what that they are not: men, I argue that the process of gendering is also a process of Othering.

Can the first person self and the third person gaze be reconciled in the creation of an ethical self? How can a theory of the body as ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ also be a theory of ethical self-cultivation? Keane (2014, 2017) argues that an individual’s self-understanding as an ethical being is instigated through interaction and takes place across differences of power (2017, 78). According to Keane ethical life does not automatically emerge from the individual; it requires ongoing social interaction to bring about and reshape an individual as they progress through the life course¹³⁴. In daily life a woman is engaged with others’ evaluations of her, something she has limited control over. As such everyday interactions include a reflexive dimension, “evidence of social worth and of mutual evaluations will be conveyed by very minor things, and these things will be witnessed, as will the fact that they have been witnessed” (Goffman 1972, 33 and Keane 2017, 101). In other words, “the fact that I witnessed something about you is itself something that you notice” (Keane 2017, 101). This notion of reflexivity can also be understood as “being an observable” where one

¹³³ Stuart Hall writes in “The Spectacle of the Other” a theoretical trajectory of postcolonial representation of the other. Citing Said’s discussion of Orientalism and Foucault’s (1980) power/knowledge, Hall writes that a discourse produces a form of “racialized knowledge of the Other deeply implicated in the operations of power” (260). Power in this sense rests in Foucault and Gramsci’s idea of hegemony, where certain cultural forms dominate others. However, within hegemony there is a circularity of power, where the powerful and the powerless are engaged in a circularity of producing new discourses, kinds of knowledges, objects of knowledge, institutions and new practices; thus, power circulates, though not on equal terms.

¹³⁴ For a feminist interpretation of women’s ethical challenges and the demands of interpersonal relationships see Benson 1990.

has and is aware they have an “appearance” that allows justifiable inferences about one’s moral character (Sacks 1972, 281, 333)¹³⁵.

Keane’s explanation of the reflexive nature of one’s interactions illustrates the potential vulnerability Somali women encounter in the creation of an ethical self. When women work on their outsides they are consciously aware of the gaze of others. Self-presentation requires uptake by others on the basis of what it is they take one to be presenting; thus a woman’s choice of dress becomes the moral border zone where women present virtuous selves to be recognized, and validated by others. As such, the practice of self-knowledge depends on seeing oneself from the outside (Keane 2017, 102), a form of double consciousness, or “twoness” where one’s body becomes an object of manipulation, contestation, presentation and consumption.

Keane’s theory is compelling and reconciles the inside and the outside in processes of self-cultivation, however Keane’s understanding of intersubjectivity suggests that ethical cultivation exists between two conscious minds: that of the doer and their reflexive ingenuity, and that of the observer and their gaze. In other words, living an ethical life depends not only on the ways in which a woman conceives of her ethical self, but also the ways in which someone else recognises her as such. I agree that this understanding of the intersubjective consciousness is vital in informing ways that Somali women work on and discipline their bodies as a means of ethical self-cultivation; however I challenge Keane’s suggestion that recognizing another’s view, whether in opposition or coordination, is necessarily a developmental achievement and one that, if in opposition, must be overcome.

Keane writes that overcoming difference through “cooperation and coordination...depends on the child’s ability to identify with others insofar as they *are* others” (81). I agree with this humanistic view of ethics, and in fact it is one that I try to achieve in this thesis to show that They (Somali women) aren’t so different from Us (or, me, an American woman and British PhD student). Yet, drawing on postcolonial theory, it is not accurate to suggest that an ethical life be predicated on a “sharing” of perspectives, particularly when power sometimes flows in one direction (towards the coloniser), and becomes historically,

¹³⁵ Sacks also writes “Human history proper began with the awareness by Adam and Eve that they are observables” (1972, 281, 333).

politically, and culturally institutionalised (and in turn psychologically institutionalised). For example, Du Bois' identity as a "Negro" and an American is embedded within hegemonic structures to the extent that it becomes part of his consciousness, and prevents the Other from ever becoming the other (the white man). As such, Du Bois' notion of the self is not simply an intersubjective notion between him and the white man; it also includes his consciousness as not a white man. Somali women's notions of the self include a series of practices that make them 'not-men' (body modifications and dispositions that gender the body), as well as depending on the gaze of men to make them "observable". Thus, I argue that the self is more than two, it is entangled. A woman's cultivation of an ethical self is not only between two minds (first and third person perspectives), but it also of two minds (women are Other because of what they are not: men).

4.5 Fantasy and fetishization

As women modify their bodies inside and out, they undergo a process of gendering, and a process of Othering. These processes are not only processes of ethical self-cultivation reflected through values represented and enacted through specific body modifications, but they are also processes of power. Power flows through social interaction, and is negotiated on and through the body. One such example of the circularity of power is the regime of representation of women and their bodies, notably their sexualisation through fantasy and projection¹³⁶. Women's bodies come to represent the gaze of the world projected onto them in the processes of gendering and Othering, and thus in the process of ethical self-cultivation. As such a woman's body no longer exists as a whole; rather it exists as a disassembled set of relevant parts- bottom, breasts, vagina, nose, hair- that need to be disciplined, and thus a woman becomes a set of objects to be fetishized.

Anthropological understandings of the term "fetish" refer to a sacred or symbolic object that, according to worshipers, has supernatural power (Pietz 1985). Building on this, Marx (1976) proposed a theory of commodity fetishism, where through the power of belief a commodity has intrinsic value and exists in a hierarchy of value. In other words, young women's bodies are objectified such that they are material objects, or commodities, to be

¹³⁶ For example, Hall (1997) analyses the way in which Sarah 'Saartjie' Baartman was represented as an object of fantasy and fetishism. He argues that in writings on "The Hottentot Venus" there was a preoccupation with marking her difference, so much so that it became pathologized to a medicalised form of the Other.

consumed and fetishized. Their body parts are valued to the extent that their subjective value becomes objective and requires discipline. A woman's vulva and virginity represents (re)productive power, amongst other things¹³⁷, to the extent that it must be controlled and contained. What is hidden underneath a woman's clothing suggests that the power of fantasy is not only in what is shown or seen, but also lies in what is not visible¹³⁸ (Hall 1997). Fetishism exists through the means by which a desire is both indulged and denied¹³⁹ (Bhabha 1982). In other words Somali women, again, embody the contradictions illuminated in Muhammed's *Qoys Kaab* lesson where a woman is at once to be seen, but not shown; at once shining, but not too brightly. She is the guardian of her diamond, her body and virginity, only to be had on her wedding night.

Fetishisation of women's bodies is most observed and felt in women's everyday experiences of street harassment. Nearly all women, including every woman I met during my many trips to Hargeisa, lamented about the street harassment from men. Street harassment is an everyday occurrence, and I argue that harassment acts as a constant reminder of one's body. The repeated commentary and sometimes, although less frequent, physical touching by men creates a sense of alienation from one's body. The body becomes an object to be consumed, and the body becomes cultivated through intersubjective interaction with and consciousness of one's harasser. Thus when women take the bus, eat in a café, or walk through the market they are conscious of their body and the ways that the world experiences it and them. Experiences of harassment create women's feelings of objectification and sense of the Other, and ground women's third person perspective of ethical self-cultivation.

As such, the ways that women modify their body through work and discipline is a conscious effort. The choices they make in how to act on and through their bodies are the result of a process of conscious deliberation and reflection. For example, it might be assumed that because my Somali friends covered their hair every day the act of covering became an

¹³⁷ I do not argue that FGC is a result of a patriarchal society that forces the protection of a woman's honor, purity, and sexuality, that is much too simple of an explanation and there are too many other societies considered patriarchal that do not practice FGC to validate such an argument.

¹³⁸ "What is shown or seen, in representation, can only be understood in relation to what cannot be seen, what cannot be shown" (Hall 1997, 266).

¹³⁹ "It [fetishism] is a non-repressive form of knowledge that allows for the possibility of simultaneously embracing two contradictory beliefs; one official and one secret; one archaic and one progressive; one that allows the myth of origins, the other that articulates difference and division" (Bhabha 1982, 32).

unconscious practice towards the pious notion of modesty. In reality, choosing what to cover one's hair with and how to cover one's hair was never an unconscious act, instead it was determined according to learned skills and abilities informed by experience. One friend, Nasra, always wore a hijab with a colourful skirt and shirt combination when we met at the café. The day we arranged to visit the mosque I had trouble recognising her because she wore a black *niqab* and very large *jilbab* with gloves. She consciously chose to manipulate her appearance based on where she was going and who would see (or in this case not see) her. Another friend, Mariam, always wore a bright pink *jilbab* to *Qoys Kaab* lessons on Friday. When I arranged to see her at her home she wore a mesh scarf over her hair, and when we left to her friend's house for a party she wore a silk hijab covered in bright flowers. Mariam consciously altered her outside according to learned skill and ability that she acquired. This may seem rather obvious, and in some ways, it is meant to be. If one knows one is going to a job interview one will dress in more professional clothes than if one was sitting at home watching TV. This reflection on a woman's 'choice' itself is heavily influenced by media and other parameters that determine the acceptable and possible. They 'choose' between different head coverings – but they cannot 'choose' not to cover their heads, and they 'choose' skin whitener because fair skin is everywhere put forward as the epitome of beauty.

However, I argue that for Somali women their choice of dress serves as a moral border zone, a site of calculation requiring a mastery of skills to bring about a desired result. That desired result is an ethical self, a self that shines just the right amount. Thus, modification of the inside through mastery of skills and abilities like personality development, confidence, and knowledge are virtues to be worked towards. They are virtues that one acquires after much work, like attending both Quranic School and university. They are virtues that deepen in meaning over time, in relation to amount of time studying and cultivating self-knowledge, and in turn learning practices to discipline the self like how to manage stress or even how to identify good from bad menstruation pain.

Modification of the outside includes a mastery of skills needed to simultaneously cultivate bodily desirability, fertility, and the potential for marriage as well as maintaining modesty through dress, voice, and posture. As such, working on the body suggests learning how to shine, while disciplining the body suggests learning how not to shine too much. And for

Somali women, the acts of disciplining the body are more than physical body modification, they are also acts of moral discipline acquired by learning specific skills and abilities.

4.6 Discipline

Disciplining the body as part of the process of ethical self-cultivation has a long tradition in Aristotelian ethics, which influenced numerous Islamic thinkers¹⁴¹. For Aristotle (2009) the body plays an important role in ethical evaluation with a causal relationship between social order and bodily demeanor, specifically as one undergoes conscious “training” in the process of attaining embodied dispositions. This is reflected in Somali women as they consciously act on the body through body modifications that train the body to shine just the right amount. Through training women come to embody the (sometimes competing) virtuous dispositions of modesty (*deggan*), piety (*cibbaado*), spirituality, and materialism (*maaddiyaad*, *lacag jacayl* lit. money love). This form of ethical self-cultivation implies that virtue is acquired through the learning of skills and abilities such that virtues become a permanent feature of one’s character. Thus “acting well” is part of a process where one learns to embody a specific virtuous disposition as a means to achieving one’s destiny; this is a process of discipline.

This Aristotelian process influenced 14th-century Muslim thinker Ibn Khaldun who discusses the principle of *malaka*, or habit, which is “an acquired excellence at a moral or practical craft, learned through repeated practice until that practice leaves a permanent mark on the character of the person” (Mahmood 2001, 839). According to this formulation inward dispositions are understood to articulate visible behaviors, and the inside and outside synchronize in accord with a specific model of exemplary behavior (ibid. 839). Mahmood’s ethnography among the women’s piety movement in Cairo (2001, 2012) informed her, now well-known, argument that such a habit, or more generally habitus, becomes embodied to the point of un-thinking or un-consciousness. For example, for the women at the mosque the emotion of fear, specifically fear of God and His retribution, is integral to ethical formation. Women learn to cultivate this emotion through actions¹⁴², like the ritual act of worship (*salat*) which is performed with humility and submission. For Mahmood’s informants “the emotion of fear not only propels one to act, but is also considered to be integral to action” (2001, 842). Thus, learning to fear God propels women to perform *salat*,

¹⁴¹ Notably the 11th century theologian Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111), as well as al-Miskawayh (d. 1030), Ibn Rushd (d. 1198), and Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406) (Mahmood 2001, 838).

¹⁴² “Emotions are not simply subjective states but linked to action” (Mahmood 2001, 841).

and is integral to the performance of *salat*. Women learn to habituate the fear of God to the point that it pervades all of their actions, or as Mahmood writes “repeated bodily behavior, with the appropriate intention (however simulated in the beginning), leads to the reorientation of one’s motivations, desire, and emotions until they become part of one’s “natural” disposition” (2001, 843); in other words they become part of one’s habitus.

Mahmood’s argument is compelling; in fact I similarly argue that the body is a tool through which certain kinds of ethical capacities are attained. Through forms of body modification Somali women’s bodies act as a tool to creating a virtuous self. One’s body undergoes a process where it is worked on in order to shine, and disciplined in order to shine in the ‘correct’ way. One’s choice of dress is a site of contestation where one learns to shine correctly. The inside and outside are modified as part of a process of ethical self-formation.

For my Somali informants the learning of skills and abilities to create a virtuous self is a practice that is not always straightforward, but that women continue to undertake throughout their lives. However, for Somali women this practice never becomes habituated to the extent that they no longer think about their actions and the emotions that drive them. Instead, the continual objectification of their bodies from the gaze of the world together with the harassment that these women endure when they leave their homes, serves as a constant reminder of their outside body. Women do aim to cultivate an inside of strength and resilience; however this is not in isolation from the outside. For Mahmood’s Cairene interlocutors the inside emotion that women simulate and eventually habituate transfers to one’s outside through actions. For Somali women, the inside and outside work together in a dialectical relationship; the inside emotions of fear, outrage, embarrassment, shyness, etc. manifest themselves on their outsides through disposition, posture, and words. And similarly the outside, including the gaze of the world, manifests itself inward to create such emotions. Through the near constant objectification of women’s bodies the insides and outsides consciously inform each other, and choice of dress is a moral border zone where they are brought into harmony through conscious consideration, including the learning of specific skills and abilities to create harmony.

Understanding this potential tension as a site of calculation and contestation is possible through analysis of Somali women’s choice of dress, or what I call “armour.” Women’s

choice of dress¹⁴³ acts as a kind of armour because women consciously deliberate about what to wear and how to wear it ultimately as a means to create a bodily disposition. Choice of armour must create a disposition that suggests desirability and modesty, and at the same time it is often a defence against potential street harassers. Much like choice of hijab style depends on where one is going and who one will possibly encounter, a woman's armour is skilfully selected based on calculated criteria.

If a woman is going to a wedding she might wear a sheer *dirac* that shows off her silhouette, and she might display her hair and a face full of make-up according to a style she saw online. However, she will also consider her travel to the wedding, *will she take a taxi? Or will her brother drive her? At the wedding, will the photographer be an unrelated male? Will her grandmother be there, or just her friends?* Her choice of armour will depend on such calculations, and in turn will influence the disposition she aims to cultivate. In the case of many weddings women desire to cultivate a playful and fun disposition, one where women will dance, recite *baraanbur*¹⁴⁴, and eat food.

Alternatively, if a woman is going to the market she will select armour based on a different set of calculations that influence her to create a defensive or even aggressive disposition. When going to the market many women dress more conservatively, wearing clothes that don't "shine" too much, that are looser, and that have extra layers. Armour doesn't necessarily mean that a woman wears more clothing, instead it refers to the calculated disposition she desires to create. The armour can be "polished" and shine, like when going to a wedding, and it can be "dulled" and "heavy," like when going to the market. Armour serves as a physical barrier between a woman's body and the outside world, it is a form of protection from "the gaze of the world." Wearing armour may "deflect" street harassment, by evoking a more aggressive disposition that for my friend Basr includes shouting insults in return to verbal and physical harassment, or for my friends Alaso and Ambro, can result in fits of laughter at the absurdity of comments. And, many times the armour may be "penetrated" by harassment and women may react like my friends Sagal and Sahra who wear more armour, keep their eyes down, and pretend not to hear shouts from men on the street.

¹⁴³ For a historical perspective and analysis on Somali women's changing dress practices see Abdi 2007.

¹⁴⁴ A form of women's poetry.

My friend Faysa has, at times, mastered the skills and abilities needed to cultivate a bodily disposition that expertly balances values like modesty and desire. Faysa, although nearly ten years younger than me, offered to accompany me to the main market to help establish a relationship with a market woman to help me get fair prices on fruits and vegetables. She was also troubled by my stories of harassment in the market, the location I was most harassed and physically bothered. We met at the Telesom office just outside the market one hot and windless afternoon. Faysa, who usually wears a simple black *abaya* and headscarf, was wearing her usual *abaya* and headscarf plus black socks, black sandals, black gloves, and a black *niqab*. I looked at her quizzically and tugged at her *niqab* joking that she decided to cover her pretty face. Faysa simply said it's market day and pulled at my hand, guiding me through the street, through groups of staring men, between cars idling in traffic, past donkeys tied to wooden carts, and into the market, weaving me down narrow walk ways and past stalls. As we entered the clothes section we were instantly bombarded by the men working in stalls. I found the way they line the narrow path, the way they stare, and their endless train of comments suffocating. Faysa doesn't look at them, she doesn't even seem to hear them; I do the same. Faysa pulled me along like a child trailing her mother, we moved quickly, with purpose, not stopping for anyone or anything until we eventually reached the fruit and vegetable area at the back of the market. The smell of fresh meat in the heat was overpowering, and the flies instantly assaulted us. I pointed Faysa towards the friendly woman I usually buy from, and as we selected the best looking vegetables I could tell Faysa approved of my bargaining and was pleased that the woman is reasonably fair with me (I still pay a foreigner price, but it is a fair foreigner price according to Faysa). I handed the woman my money and filled my cloth bag with vegetables.

Faysa took my hand again and leads me towards a narrow walk way that passes by the men's clothing, the women's hair products, and leads to the fruit section of the market and eventually the busy street. As she pulled me this way and that I struggled to keep my heavy bag of vegetables on my shoulder while negotiating whether to have the bag over my *shalmad*, pulling the fabric tightly over my chest and revealing the curve of my chest, or to have it under my *shalmad*, risking the scarf falling open to show my neck.

I felt constantly aware of my body, of the gaze of the male stall attendants, while Faysa seems unfazed even though I can feel the grip of her hand getting tighter and her palm growing sweatier. Each stall attendant we pass makes a comment about us, and suddenly I

felt that the energy in the section we are passing through has changed. Faysa sensed it too and squeezes my hand a few times then tugged on my arm to walk faster. We turn here, we turn there and I could finally see the cars idling in traffic not far ahead. We passed the last set of stalls and I heeded a row of men hissing at us, watching us, laughing and commenting about us.

When we finally emerged on the dusty and busy street we both sighed and relaxed. I asked Faysa what the men said since I didn't understand it, and told her I felt uncomfortable walking past them. She lifts her eyes up to mine and says she can't tell me, that what they said was too horrible, too dirty. I plead with her, telling her I want to know, and she explains that the tall, skinny man asked the other men if he could "fuck us" and if so which one he would "have first." She explains that none of the other men came to our defense telling this man to shut up, instead they just laughed in amusement.

In this situation Faysa's armour was to completely cover her body and to remain stoic, pulling me through the market without responding to any of our harassers. This experience, and many others, influenced my own transformation; by altering my dress, my posture, and my methods of dealing with harassment I began to learn a specific "armoured" disposition too¹⁴⁵.

Choice of dress is not only part of a balance between sexual intrigue and modesty; it is also part of a learned disposition balancing one's presentation of "armour" and sexual desire. Women have the capacity to choose, through attention to their bodies and dress, when it is advantageous to wear armour and what type of armour to wear. However, this choice is not always so simple, sometimes practical life gets in the way of ethical intention; for example if a woman is carrying a handbag on her shoulders, and her hands are full of bags filled with goods from the shop, she may struggle to adjust her scarf if it falls or to hold it away from her body if the wind blows towards her. The self that she presents is subject to potential misinterpretation. Many individuals may recognize her struggle in carrying the bags by a grimace on her face and forgive her laxity adjusting her clothing, or even offer to help her. Others may observe that she doesn't fix her scarf or hold her dress away from her body, thus revealing the outline of her breasts, stomach, and legs. Her presentation

¹⁴⁵ I have only provided a female centered analysis of street harassment, but the behavior of the men in the market is certainly not representative of all men; although harassment is a big part of the female experience in Hargeisa.

may be interpreted salaciously or unfavorably. For example, two young British-Somali men who resettled in Hargeisa explained that when a woman doesn't adjust her scarf or dress she intentionally wants to be seen, to be looked at, to be consumed. They understood this as a conscious provocation, indicating her sexual desire and potential moral 'looseness'. They explained that a woman "like that" is someone you "have fun with" but not someone you marry. This places women in a vulnerable position that will be discussed more in Chapter 7. In conclusion, the objectification and consumption of women's bodies as part of an intersubjective relationship is sometimes out of one's control. Often women's ethical intentions are misinterpreted or they may not have the freedom to choose how their bodies are modified; in other words the self is vulnerable.

4.7 Virtue and freedom

In the previous section I built on Mahmood's theory of discipline to include women's insides and outsides. I also provided an ethnographic counter example to her argument that through habituation women embody ethical dispositions to the extent that they no longer need to think about them. Instead, I argue that because Somali women's bodies are subject to daily street harassment they are always consciously aware of their bodies as objects, and possesses a certain reflexivity that is part of the intersubjective nature of ethical self-cultivation.

In what follows I introduce a theory of freedom that is subsequently developed throughout this thesis. I highlight the role of consciousness in women's choice making when it comes to their bodies but also acknowledge the limitations of such freedom. I specifically intend to differentiate between bodily modifications that women choose to undergo and those they are forced to undergo (differentiated from misinterpretation of ethical intentions). I conclude this section by proposing that although Somali women are forced to undergo certain body modifications they do not necessarily passively accept them, instead they engage in lively debate, discussion, and the re-telling of trauma which actively influences what I argue is part of a new moral argument based on the values important to young women.

Individuals may at times act with ambivalence (like the British Somali men who 'misinterpret' women's dress), or there may be moments in life when they may not 'know where they are going' and what they are 'working towards' and that they simply desire to

act well and balance the good and the bad (like Fowsia's *qaat* chewing and rapid transformation to performing *salat*). Often actions can be analysed as 'two sides of the same coin': innocent to some, harmful to others. For example, 'sinful' actions like chewing *qaat* or catcalling women may not be considered culturally and piously 'wrong' or 'harmful' by everyone. For example, there is a new order of Wahabi Islam that considers *qaat* to be forbidden, while many religious elders consider it permissible. This tension in 'correct' understanding and practice of Islam is explored more through women's sisterhoods in Chapter 5. Additionally, many friends explained that on Judgement Day a person's actions will be 'weighed'; if they have done more 'good' than 'bad' then they will go to Paradise. For example, Fowsia knows that chewing *qaat* is 'wrong' but she does it anyway. She can 'balance' (or purify) this 'wrong' by, for example, praying *salat* 5 times a day (see opening vignette) or fasting during Ramadan.

However, actions undertaken with reflective consciousness, or having chosen to act in a certain way, indicate moral action. One may consciously choose to be ambivalent, yet this does not make one amoral, or one may not have clear direction or be facing uncertainty in life but one consciously deliberates about how to act well, again suggesting moral action. In other words, when a woman reflexively considers how she will act, she is making a moral choice.

For Laidlaw the notion of reflexive consciousness indicates one's freedom to choose how to act, and as such freedom is the central tenet in his theory of ethics¹⁴⁷. Laidlaw applies this framework to a critique of Mahmood's (2012) work with women in the Cairo mosque movement. To recap, Mahmood suggests that disciplining one's body through repeated and habituated actions creates an embodied disposition. Women in her study perform *salat* with the conscious intention of creating a pious disposition. Eventually, after habituated practice they come to embody a pious disposition without having to think about it. Laidlaw calls this an "ethical unconsciousness" (2013b). He eloquently argues that when women no longer think about the actions they perform, or participate in reflexive consciousness, then they are no longer cultivating an ethical disposition and a moral self. For example, a woman who wants to shine will deliberate about how she may achieve this outward glow, she may 'think' about putting on make-up before going out, or she may

¹⁴⁷ Similarly, consciousness is a form of freedom for Fanon (2008). He argues that it is only when the Black man becomes conscious of his position as not white, of his place as oppressed, and of himself as an Other that he will begin to free himself from the tyranny of colonial oppression.

think about her physical disposition while walking to the bus (making eye-contact, smiling, greeting people, etc.).

In this chapter I have shown, through a theory of bodily ethics that Somali women consciously engage in working on and disciplining themselves. For them, conscious reflexivity is part and parcel of their bodily experiences in creating an ethical self. Following this argument it would seem that Somali women are 'free'¹⁴⁸ to consciously decide which body modifications they will undergo, whether it's donning their armour or working on their insides through learning and knowledge. However, the self is vulnerable to misinterpretation and to constraints in one's freedom. For example, I have shown that sometimes women's ethical intentions are misinterpreted, like when the British Somali men explained to me that a woman who does not pull her dress away from her body wants to be looked at, due to the intersubjective nature of creating an ethical self. Such misinterpretation reveals the potential for failure and the 'trial and error' women undergo in learning the skills and abilities needed to create an ethical self, and in turn needed to realize one's destiny. Women's freedom is constrained as a consequence of forced body modifications like FGC.

Laidlaw theoretically explains such limits to freedom as "something constructed out of the role given to choice in various cultures and in various domains within specific cultures" (2002, 323). Building on this Robbins suggests that culture has a primary role in moral life, where culture "defines a space for freedom and choice" (2007a, 295)¹⁴⁹. In other words, Somali society creates women's choices and limits women's actions to the adherence of cultural norms understood as binding (ibid. 296)¹⁵⁰.

Such a theory of freedom as limited by social norms helps differentiate between body modifications that women choose to do themselves (even if they are judged as harmful by some, like skin whitening), and those done to them (like FGC). It also underscores the harm binding norms can impose as evidenced through women's FGC trauma; including fears about being opened by one's husband on the wedding night; to the experiences of

¹⁴⁸ P. Benson (1990) also argues that to be free is to be capable of self-domination (50).

¹⁴⁹ Robbins continues to propose a theory of value as central to conceptions of culture; see Chapter 7 for more.

¹⁵⁰ Placing virtue as the object of analysis illuminates a theory of cultural change, including changes in morality see Chapter 7 for more.

obstructed labor that often lead to difficult childbirth (*ummul*) (and even death); and to the repeated infections that women endure throughout the life course, including past menopause.

Although binding norms may appear static, understanding the values that inform women's choices in their everyday life reveals the potential for cultural and moral change. For example, mothers may choose to cut their daughters for a myriad of reasons: potential for a better marriage partner, cleanliness, gendering of the body, part of the process of becoming a woman, religious duty, sexual control. The reasons mothers may choose Sunna instead of Pharaonic are part of a process of deliberation and conscious reflection. Mothers may draw on their own FGC experiences, or the virtues and values associated with the health, human rights, and religious discourses.

However, such variation in cutting preference, personal experience, and justification suggests that there is sometimes value conflict when women deliberate the practice. For example, when my friend Magol and her elder sister engage in debates on FGC it is evident that their own life experiences and situations influence their cutting preferences. Magol is beautiful, educated, and engaged to marry a Somali man living and working in Qatar. In contrast her sister suffers with epilepsy and is thus not considered to be as beautiful, nor was she able to attend school, and she openly acknowledges that she will not marry. I observed one heated debate, shortly before Magol's wedding, over the type of cutting Magol should give her potential future daughter. Magol argued that she would make sure her daughter was cut according to Sunna because she felt that it was Islamically justified and supported, Pharaonic was not needed or necessary. She also argued that on a woman's wedding night she would not face any health problems, nor would she later during child birth. Magol's sister disagreed and argued that Sunna is not pure, only Pharaonic can ensure a woman's purity and cleanliness.

This variation in preference, experience, and justification suggests that there is negotiation and sometimes conflict of the values of piety, health, economics, purity, cleanliness, and womanhood. When values are in conflict women's freedom, and its constraints become illuminated; in other words the debates and discussions that women engage in about FGC reveal their conscious deliberation in choice making about what type of circumcision to give their daughters. It also reflects the current contestation of values, as compared to that

of ten years ago (or more), where women now have the freedom to choose Sunna or Pharaonic (before women could have only have Pharaonic), and it helps outsiders understand why women may choose to cut at all; they are bound by cultural norms.

Additionally, the shift in preference from Pharaonic to Sunna suggests that the process of deliberation and conscious reflection can, and is leading to a new morality. I argue that although women are bound by cultural norms as they engage in conscious deliberation, this does not mean that those norms are static. Instead, when values are in conflict (for example if health and piety are in conflict) women's debate and discussion leads to cultural change and arguments for a new morality. For example, I attended a local NGO workshop on FGC where female activists, young women, health practitioners, government officials, and religious elders debated FGC. Each group followed a different paramount value and as such the discussion turned heated, and almost resulted in a fist fight between female activists and the religious elders. Female activists argued against all forms of cutting citing women's health and their own traumatic experiences, explaining that there is no social need for the practice to continue. In contrast religious elders argued that Sunna circumcision is obligatory under Islam, and that Pharaonic circumcision is now considered "wrong" (they once deemed it obligatory). A heated argument ensued and came to a peak when a young woman stood up to say that if the religious elders say Sunna is obligatory then it must be followed. This revealed that for many Somalis, piety is the paramount value informing FGC, but that correct notions of piety have changed such that Pharaonic is no longer "good" and that women must now have Sunna. This indicates that value hierarchies can change and values come into conflict with each other, but as women consciously deliberate practices like FGC then new moral orders come to the fore (like with Sunna now being the preferred type of cutting). As I will argue in later chapters, sometimes a new morality can lead to a movement where the values that inform women's actions require systematic change in society.

4.8 Discussion

As I stated earlier in this chapter, action (or activities) implies taking initiative, the sense of a beginning, or setting something into motion. In the cases of FGC and armour action creates the potential for a new morality; whether it's by shifting binding norms or altering the way the self is perceived from the outside. This new morality it attained through virtuous action; where women must work on creating a body that shines, but they must

also discipline the body so that it doesn't shine too much. Attaining the 'correct' amount of shine is a process that evolves and changes¹⁵¹, and it is a process of ethical self-cultivation. The menu of body modifications that women undergo symbolize virtuous endeavors at attaining and balancing, at times, competing values. These values are sometimes in conflict because they are influenced by and learned through the passing down of intergenerational knowledge, INGO activist agendas, friends and family living abroad and in Hargeisa, social media and television, and finally they are influenced by the constraints of poverty or the abundance of excess.

I begin my exploration of women's intimate relationships in this thesis with women's bodies. I begin here because the types of body modifications that women undergo are the result of deliberate and conscious action; whether chosen by the woman herself, or by her mother and grandmother. For example, women consciously choose what to wear depending on where they are going and who they may see. In the case of FGC young girls do not choose whether or not they want to be cut, however as they grow older the relationship they have with their bodies and their understanding of the practice deepens and evolves. No matter their clan, age, location, education, or economic background, women engage in conscious deliberation about their own FGC experiences, other women's experiences, its religious significance (or not), their marital and sexual desires, whether or not they would cut their daughters, and how they might cut their daughters (Sunna, Pharaonic, by a traditional birth attendant, in the hospital). I witnessed discussions on FGC in women's homes, in hospitals, at university, at Qoys Kaab, and between groups of women, religious elders, doctors, and activists. Women were reminded of their FGC, or as I quoted Fowsia at the start of this chapter they "died," every time they went to the toilet, menstruated (*caado qab, dhiig*), had intercourse, and gave birth. Many women explained that they had a hole the size of a grain of rice through which to pass urine and menstrual blood. It would take women a long time to relieve their bladders and many developed urinary tract infections as a result of these difficulties. Women also had difficulty passing menstrual blood, some reported large clots that eventually had to be surgically removed, and others described frequent infections from trapped menstrual blood and clots. I was told that menstruation is extremely painful and often witnessed my friends crying in bed

¹⁵¹ This relates to changing FGC preferences because, for example, religious elders have stated that Pharaonic is not Islamic; thus a body that wants to shine in a pious light must have the 'correct' cut. Additionally, the value of sexual satisfaction in marriage is taking prominence amongst educated, urban elite and middle class. Thus acting in accord with this value is also a means of shining.

for several days with pain. It is these experiences that deepen their relationship with their bodies, facilitate self-knowledge (through experiences of pain management), and result in conscious reflection of personal experience.

Through this process women, like Nasra, come to understand what has actually been done to them¹⁵³. This process which began as a limitation of a girl's freedom, eventually leads to conscious and deliberate action where women share, discuss, and debate the practice. It also leads to young women acting differently than their mothers and grandmothers; all of the young women I met said they would not give their daughters Pharaonic¹⁵⁴. Whether or not this is true merits further long term study, but this suggests that although a young girl's freedom is bound by her society and her age, as she develops more understanding, knowledge, and experience the norms she is bound by become contestable, and can be pushed to the limit or even crossed. The change in FGC preference suggests that binding norms are not static and over time (both historical and life course) they have the capacity to evolve and change¹⁵⁵.

Finally the negotiations women make in, on, and through their bodies sets their destiny in motion, however the path towards one's destiny is not linear and is subject to failure. Elliot (2016) writes of her young Moroccan interlocutors that "one's conjugal destiny is generally discussed in positive terms, and the possibility of a desirable future is not necessarily disapproved by negative events and encounters in the present" (496). Much like the Somali women I met, hope is an integral part of the practice of one's destiny. Although women acknowledge that perhaps it is in their destiny to marry an undesirable man, to potentially never have children, or to never find love, they always maintain hope that they will. Even Fowsia who is considered to be in old age still strives to "act well" and virtuously, in order to affect her destiny. Although she chews *qaat* it is sometimes in the effort to reach a state of *jibbo*, which helps her communicate with her spirits. She balances this behavior by transforming during *salat*; she covers her hair, purifies her body, and prostrates her body towards Mecca. For her *qaat* chewing and *salat* are not incompatible,

¹⁵³ She was told she "only" had Sunna but as she grew older she came to learn she actually had Pharaonic. This was not an uncommon realisation amongst my informants.

¹⁵⁴ And, many young men voiced preference for women with Sunna instead of Pharaonic. One male friend explained that he wanted his future wife to feel sexual pleasure and he argued that if she had Pharaonic that would not be possible. Although his statement is not necessarily factually true the change in young men's preference is interesting to observe alongside young women's.

¹⁵⁵ See Chapters 7 and 8 for more.

both are a means of acting virtuously and working on one's destiny through appropriate (outer) bodily disposition.

When 'failures' occur women frame them as part of the test of *dunya*, a test from God to see if one can still act well in the face of hardship. If one can endure and persist by acting well then they may achieve what they believe is their destiny in the life of the other world. However, this does not mean that women must sit idly by while enduring hardship. There are actions women can take on their bodies to cultivate a virtuous body that shines just the right amount, inside and out; there are skills and abilities that women can learn through sisterhoods (Chapter 5); there are actions women can take to work in, on, and through time towards their desired destiny (Chapter 6); and there are realities that women must face in the process (Chapter 7).

In conclusion, this chapter shows the outward, inward, and upward movements over the life course. Over time, women's cultivation of a self moves outward as they learn how to shine, and moves inward as they develop the skills and abilities to 'dull' their shine. Additionally, women move upward towards the divine as they cultivate self-knowledge, and become closer to God.

Chapter 5: Intimate sisterhood

Khadra banged on the door of the metal gate while I stood self-consciously behind her. I was sweating, from nerves and from the humidity that filled the Friday afternoon air. It had rained just before I met with Khadra, both a relief from the oppressive heat and a blessing because of the drought.

The latch on the gate scraped against the door and a woman peeked her head out. Seeing Khadra, she stepped back giving us room to enter. The courtyard was bare and we strategically navigated our way through the mud to a veranda covered with pairs of women's worn and muddy sandals. Khadra expertly walked out of her sandals and through the group of women crowding the door while I bent over, unlaced my trainers, stuffed my socks inside them, and re-wrapped my *shalmad* around my body.

Khadra greeted women and explained who I was: A researcher who wanted to learn about *sitaat*, from America, not married, no children, not Muslim, and some Somali [referring to my language skills]. I made my way towards Khadra when the chairwoman of the group and leader of this gathering, Sheikha Halimo, waved me towards her. She was seated at the front of the room, on a small cushion and held two batons for a goat skin drum resting in front of her.

The Sheikha kissed my hand, I kissed hers, and she pulled me down to sit to her right. I gave Khadra a look that begged her to come sit next to me, which she did. I settled into my prominent seat by readjusting my headscarf, crossing my legs in front of me, and pulling my dress over my bare feet. Khadra leaned towards me to whisper that I should slide my offering [\$10] under the cushion the Sheikha was sitting on. I did as instructed, feeling very self-conscious, but the Sheikha was expert at this, subtly acknowledging my offering by lifting her bottom just enough to let me slide it under the cushion with ease.

More women filed in the room, creating a large circle and making rows, all facing the Sheikha. The effect was maze like; women lined the walls and then zig zagged one in front of each other. Soon the room was filled, except for an opening in the center, with women wearing colourful *dirac*, simple *jilbaab*, and two younger women wearing the *niquaab* pulled atop their heads to reveal their faces.

Most of the women looked older, mothers and grandmothers, and a few younger women who were perhaps their daughters. Under the women's modest clothing I could see the shape of their rounded hips, sagging breasts, and wrinkled hands showing that they had already devoted a large portion of their lives to bearing and caring for children.

The room was simple, with two windows lined with metal bars, and green and black prayer flags covering the walls. Some of the flags had white fringe, which women could tie in a knot indicating a need for blessings and prayer.

The Sheikha signalled to the women that it was time to begin by re-arranging her goat skin drum and batons in front of her. We watched, waiting for her to lead us.

Boom, boom, boom, boom.....

The drum beat was steady as she pounded the drum, and we clapped with the beat.

Clap, clap, clap, clap.....

We clapped with flat palms, creating a high pitched sound that resonated throughout the body.

We sang songs for the first ladies of Islam.

I could feel all of it- the clapping, the drumming, the singing, the heat- throughout my entire body. I felt the beat of the drum deep in my chest, I felt a sting in my hands and an ache in my arms as I clapped, and I felt a humming in my ears as the women sang.

Someone lit incense and passed it around for each of us to waft towards our faces, inhaling the smoke and strong smell. The room became smoky and the feeling of the room was otherworldly, focused, intense, and at the same time I felt grounded, in this moment, uplifted, and happy.

When it was time to leave I slowly woke to the world outside the walls of the room when the *Maghreb* (evening) call for prayer sounded. As some women formed rows for prayer I

walked outside to see the sun setting through the clouds. I slowly put my socks and trainers back on, thanked all the women for letting me attend the gathering, and found Khadra. We walked through the muddy courtyard, now filled with women serving tea from thermoses and eating sombusas. They seemed happy, relaxed, chatting with each other, having a small snack before heading back to the familiar routines of home life.

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I focus on two different, and seemingly contrasting, sisterhoods. The first, *sitaat*, is a sisterhood that is predominantly made up of women from an older generation, and what Lidwien Kapteijns calls “Sufi-in-essence,” or others may term a “mystic strain” of Islam (Marsden 2005). The second, *Qoys Kaab*, follows a form of “revival Islam,” that promotes changes in thought and behaviour of formal requirements and doctrine of Islam¹⁵⁷. The *Qoys Kaab* sisterhood is predominantly made up of young, Hargeisa women from the upper to middle educated class.

Sitaat is a religious and social gathering for women to deepen their relationship with Islam by becoming closer to God, and to provide support and counsel to the women who attend. The practice itself follows specific rituals, including the possibility of reaching *jibbo*, a trance-like state of religious ecstasy. Women often describe leaving *sitaat* sessions feeling happier, more relaxed, and having escaped the stresses of everyday life. Women not only create a social sisterhood with other women in the group, but they also create a divine sisterhood¹⁵⁸ by singing praise songs for the “first ladies” of Islam, specifically Faduumo and Xaawa (Eve) (Cawaale 2014; Kapteijns and Ali 1995). They strive to live according to the example of the first ladies of Islam in the image of the Prophet, whom they also praise through song.

Qoys Kaab are Islamic family and marriage classes that began in 2014 and continue today in Hargeisa. The school was founded by a young woman, who explained that young women are not explicitly taught the values needed to be successful in marriage, raising a family, and keeping a home. Students are taught correct understanding and practice, or enactment of virtue, according to ideals of piety (*cibbaado*), spirituality, love (*jacayl*,

¹⁵⁷ This includes an emphasis on formal textual Islam, as well as a reduction of Sufi traditions into versions of 'purified' Islam (Marsden 2005).

¹⁵⁸ For more on divine kinship see Lester 2005 analysis on postulants in a Mexican convent. See also Chapter 7 for more on the relationship women have with the divine.

cashaq), romance (*shukaansi, jacayl*), and materialism (*maaddiyaad*). The groups of women entering the school are divided according to classes named after the first ladies of Islam, so for example I was in the Khadija class. Thus, the young women's 'new' sisterhood also mirrors itself on the virtues of the first ladies of Islam in order to understand and practice what they believe to be 'correct' Islam.

I argue that although these sisterhoods conflict in how they understand and practice 'correct' notions of Islam (the older women think the younger women are too strict and conservative, while the younger women think the older women didn't learn the Quran properly and practice according to tradition), the sisterhoods are 'doing' the same thing. They are both teaching women the values needed to be successful in marriage and family life, they both provide women with practice, skills and support when faced with domestic conflict or violence, and they both emphasize the virtues of 'strong' women in the Quran as well as in daily Somaliland life who are examples of Quranic teachings.

Moral development over the life course is not only about cultivating an ethical self on and through one's body (Chapter 4), it is also about learning from peers and gaining support and guidance from other women in the community. This extends the third person perspective of ethical self-cultivation through the gaze of a sisterhood of women¹⁵⁹, and through the gaze of God.

In the broader Somali studies literature much has been written about *sitaat* (see Abdullahi 2001; Cawaale 2013, 2014; Declich 2000; Kapteijns 1995, 1999, 2009; Kapteijns and Ali 1995, 1999, 2001; Lewis 1998c; Samatar 2005; Tiilikainen 2010a, 2010b, 2012), and what has been written considers it historically, ethnographically, and linguistically. I build on this literature to illuminate how *sitaat* gatherings create spaces for moral becoming, or spaces where women learn what they "should" do by focusing on decisions and rules that govern action. Additionally, I show that the sisterhoods created inform women's ethical self-cultivation, including learning virtues that are shared with others. Women learn virtues through the social nature of a sisterhood, thus facilitating women's ability to act and providing them with goals (Keane 2017, 18-19; Laidlaw 2014).

¹⁵⁹Chapter 4 analyses the third person perspective in ethical self-cultivation through the gaze of men, and the gaze of God.

In what follows I analyse the intimate relationships that women form with other women in their community. I first describe and analyse the Somali women's devotional practice of *sitaat* to show how it is understood as a 'traditional' space of moral becoming, and the ways that sisterhoods inform women's ethical self-cultivation. Next, I introduce *Qoys Kaab*, as founded on 'correct' understanding and practice of Islam, and analyse the sisterhood in comparison with *sitaat*. I show that although *sitaat* and *Qoys Kaab* are in seeming opposition, they are actually 'doing' the same thing: creating spaces where women learn the virtues needed to live an ethical life. Both spaces emphasize divine sisterhood and create a closeness with God through the potential for spiritual and social transcendence. Finally, I show how both sisterhoods reinforce the first and third person relationship of ethical self-cultivation through the desire to learn and enact similar virtues. I build on the movements of the life course by describing the inward and reflexive nature of cultivating an ethical self, the outward projection of the self and upward unity created with God and divine sisterhoods. I conclude by suggesting that although intimate sisterhood is reimagined by young, urban women, understandings of 'modern' (*casri*, *dhaqan ka tagid*, *ilbaxnimo*) conservative Islam are not in a binary relationship with 'traditional' practices.

5.2 Women in context

During my 18 months of fieldwork I attended *sitaat* gatherings in Hargeisa (Figure 4: *Sitaat* locations), Gabiley, and Borama. In Hargeisa, I attended several sessions in the *Boqol iyo Konton* neighbourhood led by chairwoman Sheikha Halimo. In Gabiley I attended *sitaat* sessions led by Chairwoman Mama Safia, and I joined many of the Gabiley women on a 'pilgrimage'¹⁶⁰ to the village of Kalabayd. In Borama I attended numerous *sitaat* sessions and informal gatherings under the direction of Chairwoman Cadar Janaleh. All the gatherings were in designated *sitaat* locations, often external sitting rooms in the chairwoman's or a group member's house. In Kalabayd the women partaking in the annual pilgrimage gathered in a small room built at the base of "the light of Fadumo" (a small, rocky mountain) and included women from the countryside who heard about the gathering. My descriptions and analysis of *sitaat* gatherings are drawn from these experiences.

¹⁶⁰ The pilgrimage was contested between the women and male religious elders. I discuss this in more detail later in the chapter.

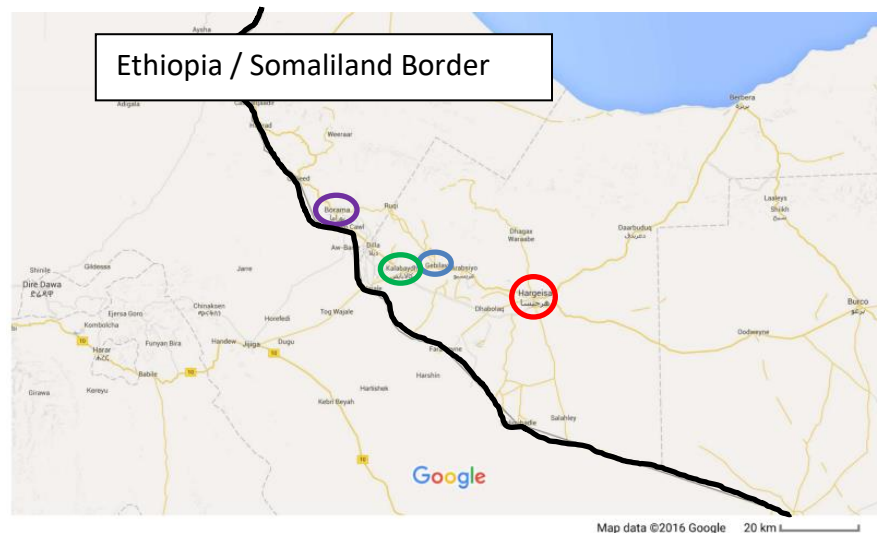


Figure 4: Sitaat locations

5.3 Sitaat

In this section I explain the religious origins of *sitaat* while describing gatherings I attended over 18 months in 2014-2015. The term “*sitaat*” originates from the Arabic “sitt,” lady, and refers to both the songs Somali women sing for the respected women of early Islam and those “first ladies” (Kapteijns and Ali 1995, Cawaale 2014). Cawaale (2014) describes it as a form of religious panegyrics with eulogies to the women of Islam, specifically Faduumo and Xaawa (Eve). *Sitaat* are sung throughout Somalia, and little is known about their origin, although Kapteijns and Ali cite oral sources that suggest a southern or southwestern origin, rather than a northern (Djibouti, Somaliland) origin (Kapteijns and Ali 1995, 11). Cawaale (2013, 2014) suggests that Faduumo (Arabic: Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet) first practiced *sitaat* while pregnant (*xaammil*) with her twin sons Hassan and Hussain. She organized a feast for poor women and children and in return asked Allah for a safe delivery of her twins. This tradition, *taraaraysi* in Somaliland and *madaxshub* in Djibouti, is still practiced in Somaliland among pregnant women during their seventh to ninth month of pregnancy.

Sitaat make up part of a range of expressions of Islamic devotion in the Horn of Africa, specifically forms of worship that are linked to the Sufi brotherhoods. Although none of the *sitaat* groups I attended had formal connections to a brotherhood and never identified as Sufi, the prominent Sufi references in their songs suggest Sufi and Qadiri (the Somali Sufi order is Qadiriya) influences towards a more ‘mystic’ form of Islam. Kapteijns and Ali (1995) write that it is possible that *sitaat* originated during a period of increased Sufi

brotherhood activity in the first half of the nineteenth century, but its pre-Islamic origin is not certain (12). In contrast, Cawaale (2014) suggests there is a direct link between *sitaat* and the Qaadiyya. The Qaadiyya Sufi order has been present, according to Cawaale, in the Somali Horn since the 15th century. Thus, Cawaale asserts that it is likely *sitaat* developed in tandem with Sufi male dominated institutions, and provided women with a separate devotional space, making it the oldest organized social space for Somali women.

In contemporary Somaliland, similar to Kapteijns' ethnography collected in Djibouti in 1987 and 1989, women perform *sitaat* on three types of occasions: weekly devotional sessions, *taraaraysi* for a pregnant woman about to give birth, and formal public performances open to all women who want to attend. A *taraaraysi* honours a woman about to give birth by the singing of blessings for a safe delivery and a healthy child. I did not have the opportunity to attend a *taraaraysi* but Kapteijns and Ali (1995) write about one they observed, "while Luula [the leader of the gathering] passed the incense burner over the young women's head, and touched her belly and head, she recited special prayers (*duco*), calling on the *sitaat* to support the girl during her upcoming ordeal and to help obtain God's blessing for a safe delivery" (12).

Formal public performances are open to all women who want to attend. These may be held during religious holidays or whenever women chose to organize them. I did not attend any public performances although one was given at the Hargeisa International Book Fair in 2015. One of the *sitaat* groups I frequented performed "professionally" and travelled to different cities when requested. They did not accept payment for their performances but instead requested donations for their efforts. The group also performed *baraanbur*, a type of Somali women's poetry performed at weddings in return for formal payment. In order to gain entry and interviews with this group I arranged for a small "professional" performance in a friend's house, which later allowed me to attend their weekly gatherings.

I also attended a form of *siyaaro*, traditionally a pilgrimage to tombs of Somali saints, more prevalent before 1991 and associated with the Qaadiyya Sufi brotherhood. I joined a pilgrimage with the Gabiley *sitaat* group to a mountain where the "Light of Faduumo" shines; this pilgrimage is not necessarily held annually or on the same day every year

allowing the *sitaat* group to negotiate protest from religious elders for violating Islamic rules and prohibitions¹⁶¹.

Sitaat weekly gatherings are “informal” and “low-key,” and are the gatherings I most frequently attended. The objective of these sessions according to Kapteijns and Ali (1995) is to honour the “first ladies of Islam” and to ask for blessings and guidance. For example, one song that we regularly sang is also documented by Kaptjeins (1999) during her research in Djibouti:

God, we begin with God’s bissinka [the phrase ‘in the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate’] God, we begin with my heart loving you. God, we begin with the blessing of Prophet Muhammad God, through the merit of Faduumo, daughter of the Prophet, we seek succour.

Before you, [the name] ‘mother’ did not exist Before you, ‘mama’ did not exist Before you, respected one, people did not say ‘mother’ to each other [...] Mother, Eve, don’t sleep, spread a bed of silk for us Mother, Eve, don’t sleep, weave your ropes for us.

Madaad, madaad, Faduumo, daughter of the Prophet Give us that for which we call upon you Ecstasy has me in its grip, my body is burning Madaad, madaad, Faduumo, daughter of the Prophet Give us that for which we call upon you.

That you take and welcome us, daughter of the Prophet, for that we clamour that you come and teach us how to walk, daughter of the Prophet, for that we clamour. You child of the Prophet, most obedient of women, give us that for which we call upon you. [...]

¹⁶¹ The *sitaat* women, and other women I spoke to about *sitaat*, explained that a *siyaaro* is “Somali tradition,” it is “not Islamic.” *Siyaaro* can be pilgrimages to Sufi tombs, they can be annual remembrances for deceased loved ones, or they can be like the one I attended to a holy site. What makes a *siyaaro* “haram” is that it is traditionally held on an annual basis, on the same day every year and involves a slaughter. Women explained to me that only during festivals like Eid can a slaughter be held on the same day every year. One older woman who holds an annual *siyaaro* for her deceased husband explained to me that she knows it is “wrong” but it makes her “feel good” to remember her husband. Younger women are not always as forgiving, as I observed with a student who accompanied me to the Kalabayd *siyaaro* with the Gabiley women. The student was very uncomfortable when she observed the women’s practices (the slaughter) and as we learned more about the annual nature of the pilgrimage. As we returned to Hargeisa we stopped for dinner and she explained to me that this group of women (as both older and rural) “don’t know Islam” and that what they are doing is “wrong.”

Lady Faduumo, lead us with your light Lady Faduumo, make us as you are Lady Faduumo, give us your musk to smell Lady Faduumo, spread your bed for us Lady Faduumo, bring us in the presence of the good Muhammad Lady Faduumo, help us climb your ladder Lady Faduumo, spread your wrap as our bedding Lady Faduumo, wrap us in your silk. [...]

Teach us how to walk, look upon us as your children Merciful God, don't keep Faduumo away from us May she take us by the hand on the Day on which One is Sorrowful Make us their [the Sitaat's] companions, Compassionate God May we all live in one home with their mothers and daughters May we all eat together with the Sitaat and the Prophet's family May we come to live in paradise¹⁶².

Cawaale (2014) also suggests that these gatherings are a medium for women to gather to “temper any negative feelings troubling them, and eventually it assists them to reconcile with the reality of the world they live in.” When I asked the women I met why they attended *sitaat* gatherings they always said because it brings them closer to God. They explained that, at a gathering, women can ask for blessings to help them with daily troubles. Some groups tie knots on the strings of prayer flags that hang on the wall and others give small gifts to the chairwoman signalling her need for prayer. The women told me that when they pray together, as a group, their prayers are more likely to be heard and accepted by Allah. According to them Allah can “listen-in” and accept prayers, but not every time, thus when they pray together their ‘voice’ is ‘louder’ it is more likely that He will hear them and accept their prayers. Praising Allah together brings them closer to Him than praying on their own. Thus, getting closer to each other also helps them get closer to God.

As I got to know the different *sitaat* groups I learned that the social dimensions of the gatherings are as important as the spiritual. Some groups collect money for tea and small snacks after gatherings, specifically as an act of charity for the women who are less well-off, but also as a means of socializing outside the home. Other groups stay after the praise session to talk through problems and come up with possible solutions, whether through individual or collective action. After one session several members, including the

¹⁶²Original text and translation by Kapteijns (1999).

chairwoman, invited male relatives into the space to share *shisha*¹⁶³. All of the *sitaat* groups worked together when a woman faced a particularly insurmountable problem; for example they might collect money for a woman, or provide advice, or even intervene in domestic issues like marital arguments or domestic violence.



Photograph 1: Sitaat gathering

During the weekly *sitaat* sessions women are seated on the floor (elder women with mobility problems sometimes sit in chairs) in a circle, lining the walls of a designated *sitaat* gathering room (in someone's house). If there are more women than can fit in the circle the women form neat rows, with everyone facing the leader. The leader--not always the chairwoman, and sometimes there is more than one leader during a session--is seated on the ground behind a round, low, and wide goat skin drum. She has two batons to play a low steady beat and she decides which songs are sung and leads the women in singing them. As women enter the gathering they usually place small sums of money near her or under the cushion she is sitting on. Another more senior woman of the group will spray perfume on the walls, the prayer flags, the palms of women and in the air during the session. Often incense is burned and a senior woman walks from woman to woman allowing her to waft the smoke for inhalation. Kapteijns and Ali note that the spraying of perfume and the scents wafting from the incense are related to Islamic ideals of cleanliness, and the Prophet and *awliyo*, or saints, pious and chosen ones, love sweet

¹⁶³ Shisha is considered taboo partly because of its 'mind altering' abilities, and smoked in the privacy of the home and only amongst trusted family or friends. One the few occasions I observed shisha smoking it was most often done by older women, or women who were visited by spirits, and in the company of either family or other women.

fragrances. *Udgoon*, “good smell” or “fragrant one,” is sung in many of the songs and considered to be an attribute of the Prophet’s (1995, 2).

During the gatherings women are conservatively covered, often with a senior woman reminding others when her scarf has fallen or if her bare feet are showing. Many of the women wear the *jilbaab*, and the few women who wear the *niquaab* remove it upon entering the room. The chairwoman keeps a steady, rhythmic drum beat as everyone sings and claps. The clapping is aggressive and loud, with flat hands producing a piercing sound. At times the clapping speeds up, usually when a woman is “feeling” the song deeply. The atmosphere is always jovial; I often looked around the room during the gatherings and exchanged smiles with women. Some groups allow for a specific type of dancing, *ciyaar* or “playing.” Women tend to dance alone or in pairs in the centre of the room from the middle to end of the song. Much emphasis is placed on knowing the song and understanding the beat well enough to finish at the right time. It took several tries for me to learn the end of the beat, often relying on intuition rather than understanding. The dancing includes jumping, spinning, producing a flowing movement with dresses and scarves, and extra emphasis is placed on the final step in time with the final drum beat and clap. Dancing takes skill, fitness, and grace; I was complimented for being “light on my feet” while I danced.

Sometimes during the dancing women may reach a state of *jibbo*, or religious ecstasy. Some groups forbid women from dancing and in turn achieving *jibbo*. Other groups accept it and guide women through the experience. I observed women achieving *jibbo* in two separate gatherings. During one gathering two young women moved to the opening in the middle of the room and started jumping and clapping with the beat. They held hands, while gripping their *jilbaab* so they didn’t trip, spinning, jumping, and turning faster and faster. They groaned and cried while spinning and dancing. They moved with closed eyes, and sweat was dripping from their faces. When the leader stopped beating the drum they collapsed to the hard concrete floor. For less than a minute they lay with their faces to the floor, heaving, crying. The Sheikha was giving them a break, letting them rest before continuing their climb towards ecstasy. When she began beating the drum again the young women slowly peeled themselves off the floor and started jumping and spinning to the beat again. As they turned and danced we clapped and sang.

In the other gathering the woman moaned and grunted, she jumped, she danced in 'conversation' with the drumming. For the women who achieve *jibbo*, they 'come down' by collapsing to the ground. Sometimes elders stand with hands outstretched and near the young women to guide them so they didn't hurt themselves or someone else. After being tended to by other women and given water they are calm and relaxed.

The songs chosen include a mixture of praise for the Prophet and other *awliyo Allaah*, or saintly individuals in Islamic history who inspire and provide guidance (Kapteijns and Ali 1995, 4). One group also sings songs for Somali saints and prophets, depicted in a "family tree" decorating the wall. The family tree depicts saints, prophets, and clans; thus indicating that women are part of a sisterhood based on Somali lineage and spirituality.



Photograph 2: "Family tree"

After songs for the Prophet and *awliyo Allah*, women sing about the early women of Islam. The days of the week are dedicated to the different "first ladies" of Islam, although this is not necessarily strictly followed. On Mondays gatherings tend to sing for Xaawo, or Eve, who is described as the "mother of the believers." There is a song honouring Aamina, the Prophet's mother, Xaliimo Sacdiyya, the Prophet's 'foster' mother, Xaajra, the mother of Ismaaciil, and Maryam, the mother of Jesus. The women sing to these "first ladies" asking for guidance and intervention in this world and the next. There are songs for the Prophet's

wives with preference given to Khadiija, his first wife and Casha, his favourite wife. Next are songs for the Prophet's daughters, particularly Faduumo. Faduumo is sometimes called upon to help the women singing to gain entry into paradise¹⁶⁴ (Kapteijns and Ali 1995, 6-12). The songs are typically sung in Somali with some Somalified Arabic idioms, and some Arabic.

Sitaat is founded on several core virtues, including "benevolence, generosity, and solidarity¹⁶⁵" (Cawaale 2013). The women that attend *sitaat* strive to achieve these virtues in service for other women in the community and in service to Allah. However, Cawaale notes that what is distinctive about *sitaat* is that it is an all-women's gathering that in service of these virtues consoles, advises, and helps women without "conspire[ing] against men or challeng[ing] their hegemony" and is not looked on with "suspicion" by men in the community (2013, 2014). I agree that women's primary intention is not to conspire against men, they have other goals at hand, but I argue their sisterhood indirectly challenges male hegemony through the act of collective female gathering and the collective projects they chose to pursue (whether coming to the aid of a member or enacting a community oriented project).

The strong bonds and relationships that women form with each other at *sitaat* gatherings extends to other realms of life, including social life and the pursuit of knowledge. Not only do women provide counsel and support to group members in times of turmoil, but the women sometimes come together to achieve a collective goal. The *sitaat* elders in Gabiley, including the chairwoman Mama Safia, relied on the sisterhood to pursue the common goal of a mosque and women's community centre. Ten years after the establishment of the *sitaat* centre (in 1968 or 1969), under the leadership of Sheikha Marian, the *sitaat* women aimed to expand the centre to include a women's mosque and community centre. They sought financial help from men of authority, such as town business men and the district commissioner, and were turned down. The women were told that they did not need to extend the centre to include a mosque, they could pray on the verandas of the existing mosque in town (Samatar 2005, 238).

¹⁶⁴ For transcriptions of many *sitaat* songs and their translation see Kapteijns and Ali 1995

¹⁶⁵ *Kalkacayl, deeqsinimo, isku duumbni.*

After strategizing, the women applied for a land grant from the local government. As Samatar writes, “they received the permit for the 2-acre plot free of charge. Such a grant was not unusual, since all unoccupied land belonged to the state. What is not known is why the town leaders and the district commissioner who ridiculed the women’s request for help did not block the land grant” (2005, 238). The mosque, the first women’s mosque in Somalia, was built by the women in 1972¹⁶⁶ (see Photograph 3: Gabiley women’s mosque circled in red. The building to the left is the men’s main mosque where women were encouraged to pray on the outdoor veranda). The women collected their savings “about \$200,” including small contributions from rural women’s daily milk sales or contributions of labour. Upon hearing of the Gabiley women’s effort, women from Djibouti also donated resources, but the women from Gabiley carried out the project (Samatar 2005, 238). Mama Safia explained to me that the women did not experience any outright anger or hostility towards their goals by men, however Samatar’s research suggests there was passive resistance from men. They didn’t stop the process, but they didn’t help it; they didn’t contribute any resources or labour. Mama Safia never expressed any tension with, or direct challenge towards men in the community, including her husband. She explained that the money the Gabiley women collected to build the mosque was their *meher* (dowry) money. This money is strictly the woman’s and she may do with it as she pleases, so it is significant that they received¹⁶⁷ and drew on their marital savings for this collective project. Additionally, the Islamic and secular local authorities never recognized or celebrated the sisterhood’s accomplishment. But, the founding women emphasised that “our project was not about getting credit,” the mosque is “a ‘Bayt Allah’ (House of Allah)” not a “women’s place” (Samatar 2005, 239).



Photograph 3: Gabiley women’s mosque circled in red. The building to the left is the men’s main mosque where women were encouraged to pray on the outdoor veranda

¹⁶⁶It took two years to construct, starting in 1970.

¹⁶⁷ For more on *meher* see Chapter 7.

The mosque is significantly smaller than the men's main mosque, but it can accommodate 300 women, who most often attend during major Islamic occasions. Shiekha Marian initially led prayers in the new mosque but the women ultimately wanted to share leadership in prayer with the Imam of the main mosque. The women requested a door be built between the men's mosque and women's so they could hear the prayers, a request denied by the men who again suggested they pray outside on the veranda. The women stood their ground and continued to have Sheikha Marian lead prayers until the men gave in. Yet, Sheikha Marian led prayers behind the male Imam, reassuring "male leaders that the women were not intent on running a separate, parallel, and equal operation in 'their' mosque" (Samatar 2005, 239). Eventually the men built a door separated with a curtain that remains today. In addition to prayer the mosque remains a place where women can learn the Quran, the Hadith, and the *Tafsiir* (Quranic exegesis). *Sitaat* gatherings continue to be held in the *sitaat* centre¹⁶⁸.

Although the intention of *sitaat* groups is not to challenge male authority or space, there remain subtle undertones of mocking resentment from some men. Many men with whom I shared my interest in *sitaat* with were firstly amazed that I knew about the gatherings and secondly laughed at me. Men's reaction is notable because although *sitaat* is not considered taboo or secretive it is still somewhat 'hidden' from outsiders. The location of most gatherings is known through word of mouth and women learn *sitaat* through family members. The laughter I endured was good natured but was often accompanied with comments about the women who attend. They do that "hocus pocus stuff," one friend's brother joked. Similarly patronizing comments suggest that many men do not take *sitaat* or the women who attend seriously. It is something 'fun' and 'silly' that older women do, women who 'don't know much' and are 'traditional' or 'rural' in their knowledge and thinking. Many young women expressed similar sentiments about the women who attend, suggesting that they aren't as educated (due to the place and time they grew up) and don't know as much about what they consider to be the correct practices and beliefs of Islam.

¹⁶⁸ Subtle tensions over the women's mosque continued after the civil war, when both mosques were damaged. The women requested for leftover building materials to repair their section of the mosque and were denied by the men, who sold items left over from the men's mosque repairs. "Younger and more militant men threatened to dismantle the women's mosque," with the women standing their ground "prepared to defend Allah's House from misguided zealots" (Samatar 2005, 240).

The dismissal of *sitaat* and the women who attend is not universal. Many older, middle class women respect *sitaat* women but view them as a lower class, less educated and therefore forgive 'naïve' practices like *sitaat*. Other women respect *sitaat* women and enjoy the gatherings themselves, they just don't attend on a regular basis because they are busy and don't have time. Some men do take the *sitaat* women and gatherings very seriously, and advocate thorough analysis and understanding of its relation to Sufism, the current state of Sufism in Somaliland, and the social and Islamic meanings of gatherings today.

The women base their aims on what they describe as Islamic values; however the women who first began the practice did not receive formal Quranic education (Cawaale 2013). Cawaale and Samatar's analysis of *sitaat* shows that *sitaat* was the means for women to embody particular virtues of Islam, benevolence, generosity, and solidarity. Additionally, *sitaat* was the means for women to collectively further their access to Islamic knowledge, and if they wished, secular education. As women learn about their spirituality from other women and through dialogue with the sisterhood and God, they are subverting Islamic hierarchies of knowledge present in Somaliland. Instead of women learning about Islam through their husbands acting as intermediaries, they gain knowledge and understanding from female leaders, through dialogue and support with other women, through praise songs with their divine sisters, and through prayer with God.

Kapteinjns and Ali also write about the significance of collective sisterhood, "*sitaat* represent an explicit assertion of the common bond and plight of women in two ways," first the singers emphasize common problems of "wives, mothers, and providers" in the underclass (in her case Djibouti). Secondly, *sitaat* appeals to the common bond of womanhood with the "first ladies" of Islam; "in doing so they explicitly assert the values as central to their own lives" (1995, 19). The songs celebrate humanity (via praise for Xaawa), wifehood (via praise for Khadijia), daughterhood and motherhood (via praise for Faduumo). The women who attend *sitaat* are linked to these "heavenly" ladies by way of "chains" of blessings (1995, 19).

The divine bond that *sitaat* cultivates extends to bonds of sisterhood. Through a system of both clan and prophet based lineage, and divine kinship, the sisterhood helps women personally, collectively, and in the community. One communal project of the *sitaat*

sisterhood is the study of Islam and its values as applied to everyday life. *Sitaat* helps spread the teaching of Islam (Cawaale 2014), and for the women I met, the 'correct' teaching of Islam. Samatar (2005) notes that the *sitaat* women in Gabiley who make up the women's mosque engage in regular debates with younger women who follow a more literalist interpretation of Islam, particularly around women's role in Islam. Additionally, he suggests that the mosque serves as an alternative resource for younger women who want to learn about Islam without following the current Islamist trend (243).

'Correct' notions of Islam also includes the correct way one ought to act and control themselves while reaching a state of *jibbo*. For example, the two young women who danced together at one *sitaat*, when the Sheikh stopped drumming the girls violently fell into the laps of women sitting near them. They lay face up, heaving and gasping for air. Their eyes were closed. Another woman stood, took a mouthful of water and sprayed it on their faces. The young women gasped. The woman sprayed water from her mouth on their faces again while we watched in silence. The girls slowly woke and stumbled outside for fresh air. The older women in the room were upset, "they need to learn to control themselves." According to the older women, the younger women had gotten carried away and not only put themselves in danger but also the other women in the room.

By attending *sitaat* gatherings, women learn about Islam through other women, in a collective learning environment. Female leaders teach formal Quranic knowledge, drawing on texts like the 'pocket' Quran Mama Safia carries in her handbag. Women also learn virtues through collective dialogue and problem solving. For example, if a group member has a fight with her husband the group will discuss the issue at hand, and deliberate as to who may be at fault. If the woman is at fault they will guide her and direct her towards the right path. If the husband is at fault the group leaders may intervene by meeting with the husband to let him know his errors. Additionally, women learn virtues through praise songs and group prayer. By praising the first women of Islam *sitaat* group members come to embody the virtues they sing about. The ephemeral and potentially transcendent experience the session can bring (whether it's reaching *jibbo*, or releasing stress) facilitates feelings of benevolence, generosity, and solidarity. The bonds of collective sisterhood and divine sisterhood create a sense of solidarity, a solidarity that binds the women together and engenders acts of kindness, support, and generosity. And, as women participate in *sitaat* they describe feeling closer to God; they experience and feel His divine gaze. Thus,

as women gain spiritual understanding and practice, and as they cultivate the virtues of benevolence, generosity, and solidarity, they are working on creating ethical-selves. In the space of *sitaat*, the subjective “I” is in a dialectical relationship with the group members, their divine sisters, and God. Women are conscious of the gaze of the sisterhood and God, and they are able to recognise feelings of kinship and unity with the sisterhood and God.

5.4 Qoys Kaab

Qoys Kaab family and marriage classes prepare urban, middle to upper class, educated women for marriage and family life. The women who attend these classes can be considered to constitute part of a capital city elite in two ways; from their socio-economic status as urban dwellers with funds available to pay university class fees, and through their entitlement to reprieve from household duties enabling them time and space to attend Friday afternoon classes. In labelling them as elite, however, it must be recognised that their privileged status exists only/within the microcosm of Somaliland’s borders. Not only is this status non-transferable beyond a specific region, but it also conceals their subordinate status inherent in being local (as opposed to diaspora), and having no legal recourse to move beyond borders, as Somali diaspora do.

The classes tend to focus on the values of piety and knowledge, but also emphasise spirituality, materialism, romance and love. For the men and women who teach classes, and for the students who attend, these values are not in conflict. Rather they are present in the ‘modern’ marital imaginary and are values to be balanced. What it means to be modern is influenced by TV, Facebook, and family abroad. For example, women can watch American romantic comedies, Indian dramas, and religious sermons by Somali sheikhs living in places like Sweden and Norway. It was common for women at the gym to ride the exercise bicycles while watching popular Somali Sheikhs living in Scandinavia speak about marriage and relationships. They also share inspirational quotes, pictures of weddings they attended, and links to articles on Facebook. The interconnected nature of women’s friendships and families means that they must balance multiple influences of their values.

As women explicitly learn the skills and abilities needed to balance these values in their everyday lives, they also implicitly learn to cultivate benevolence, generosity, and solidarity. In what follows I will describe how *Qoys Kaab* classes were created and what they teach. I will then show how the classes are also spaces of moral becoming, and create

a community of sisters, establish a divine sisterhood, and emphasize a relationship with God; in other words Qoys Kaab women are ‘doing’ the same thing as *sitaat* women.

Beerta Qoyska

Qoys Kaab family and marriage classes are based on the book *Beerta Qoyska*, or “Family Garden,” written by Nada Yousuf Cumar (2015). Nada wrote *Beerta Qoyska* to help guide women as they prepare for marriage¹⁶⁹. Nada wrote the book while she was single and ‘looking,’ and shortly after the book was published she met her now husband. The book outlines a theory for success based on ‘correct’ Islamic understanding and practice, and includes practical advice about how to enact the values important for success.



Photograph 4: Nada holding her book, *Beerta Qoyska*, along with several other books on marriage. (Qoys Kaab Facebook 2016)

For example in Chapter 1, titled “Marriage,” she gives advice for young women to achieve tranquillity, stability, and calmness with an academic authority that not only appeases the religious leaders and members of the community who initially disliked *Qoys Kaab*, but also those who attend her classes¹⁷⁰. In this passage Nada focuses on the marital value of tranquillity. She explains her interpretation of tranquillity through several lenses: that of Islam, lay-people, and Somali artists and philosophers.

Through these lenses she is able to introduce the values of stability and calmness. She emphasises that marriage is the means, or the challenge one must undertake, to achieve these virtues. She gives practical ways to achieve them, like through appropriate dress and following the leadership¹⁷¹ of one’s husband.

¹⁶⁹ The book falls into the genre of self-help, self-improvement, or personal development.

¹⁷⁰ See Appendix F for book chapters, and selected passage from Chapter 1: Marriage.

¹⁷¹ It was emphasised in several Qoys Kaab lectures that one’s husband is the leader of the family, and a spiritual leader who guides his wife in the correct understanding and practice of Islam. In a way he is a spiritual intermediary for his wife.

Dugsiga Qoys Kaab

Due to the positive response to *Beerta Qoyska* Nada opened “a school for studying family affairs in order to get a calm and happy life¹⁷²” (*Qoys Kaab* Facebook 2016, translation by Idiris Mohamoud Abdi). The school, *Qoys Kaab*, means “family help,” and teaches how to choose a “good” husband, how to live with him, and how to solve conflicts within the family. The classes are meant to help women “have happy families and children¹⁷³” (*Qoys Kaab* YouTube 2015, translation by Idiris Mohamoud Abdi). A successful family is described as one that lives with “kindness, mercy and peace” (ibid.). And, she says her teachings are based on “Somali culture and the religion of Islam” (ibid.).

Over tea at a local hotel, Nada explained that when she first started *Qoys Kaab* she encountered resistance and criticism from “everyone, sheikhs, and women.” At first her critics thought she was associated with “Western” (*reer galbeedka*¹⁷⁴) outsiders. She had to convince them that the values and lessons she taught adhered to Islamic principles and ‘correct’ standards of piety. She continued, “When you are the first to introduce something new there is always an uproar. At first people learned about marriage when they married, not before.”

To overcome criticism and to gain the trust of the wider community Nada invited her critics to attend lessons. Local sheikhs and women, young and old, came, many of whom became her students. Nada continued, “Whenever you get the anger of the people you are right. When you make people happy you aren’t showing anything new, but when people get angry you are progressing. Through happiness nothing happens.” She continued describing how she wants “to teach how to think for yourself and to be an educated woman who won’t just bend for your man.”

Piety is implicitly and explicitly emphasised, giving *Qoys Kaab* and Nada authority and legitimacy. The classes are held in Islamic Online University (IOU), where Nada earned her master’s degree in Islamic studies. The classes are held every Friday, between prayer

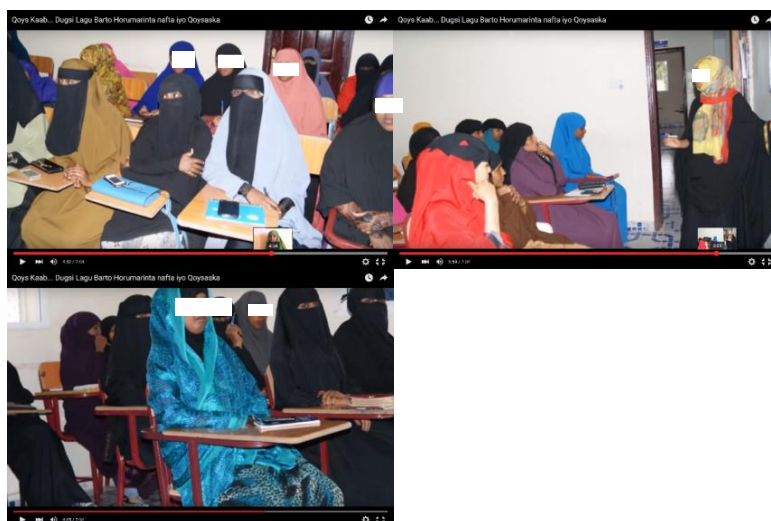
¹⁷² “Qoys -Kaab waa dugsi loogu tala galay barashada arrimaha qoyska, si loo helo nolol deggen oo dareen farxadeed iyo xasillooni waartai wadata”

¹⁷³ “Caruur iyo qoysas faraxsan.”

¹⁷⁴ Lit. clan of the west.

times, and the lessons begin and end with collective prayer. After each lesson the women gather for Maghreb *salat*, which Nada leads.

The annual cohort of students are divided according to their mastery of the topics taught. This is presumed to correlate with *Qoys Kaab* entry date, thus I was in the spring cohort and at a beginner level. Each cohort is named after one of the Prophet's wives. I was in the Khadija class with 25 other women. By naming the classes after the Prophet's wives we entered a divine family, where we learned how to enact the values of the first ladies of Islam. In addition to the divine family we created a female community based on care and sisterhood. The students called Nada 'mama,' suggesting her motherly and nurturing role in teaching us the virtues we missed out on from our blood mothers. Many women continue taking classes until they are married, and they receive a certificate of completion after one year of study.



Photograph 5: Screenshots from the Qoys Kaab informational video on YouTube (2015)

Sometimes Nada taught 'theory' lessons that emphasised Islamic piety, and other times male and female 'experts' would teach us. There are many guest lecturers who serve as 'experts in the field.' Many of the guest lecturers are men, including my first class taught by a recent university graduate, named Mohammed, who taught us 'personality development.' Another expert was a secondary school accountant who was a 'marriage expert' and had written several books. A religious expert, Sheikh Mohamed Gadhle lectured on *meher* price. However, the female experts reflect the desire for young women to be exemplars of both knowledge and piety, and Nada gave women the platform to showcase this, while also modelling 'success' stories for the students. Women like Dr. Shurki showed us subject specific knowledge in a field dominated by men. Other women

represented correct enactments of piety in family life, like Ugbaad who taught us about raising children and ‘keeping the home.’ Maria taught us how to prepare for our wedding night, including how to please our husband. Faati, a Somali woman living in Egypt taught us about the dangers of skin whitening and correct pious notions of modesty. And, *Qoys Kaab* graduates also taught lessons based on their expertise, like Hodan who is a midwifery student and emphasised the importance of virginity before marriage.

After each lesson the knowledge and skills gained were questioned, discussed, and debated. Nada always led a question and answer session so the young women had a chance to clarify and discuss the topic at hand. I suggest that it is precisely during these Q&A sessions that a new morality is conceptualised. For example, as young women question and discuss why husbands don’t pay a bride’s *meher* on the marriage day, or what is a fair amount to ask for, they express a desire for “correct Islamic knowledge”, acquired from experts, and they discuss how that knowledge can and should be applied.

5.5 *Sitaat* and *Qoys Kaab*: divergence and convergence

Sitaat and *Qoys Kaab* are two different sisterhoods that occupy very different space in the social and religious imaginary. They each understand and practice a form of Muslim spirituality they believe to be authentic and correct, and they are each reform-minded in their own ways. The *sitaat* women seek a form of Muslim spirituality that includes aspects of mystic Islam, while *Qoys Kaab* women seemingly reject all forms of mystic Islam and seek a form of spirituality that is ‘intellectual’ and reflects their textual knowledge. Yet, what constitutes mystic Islam is blurred in the spiritual imaginary. For some it is acceptable to visit a diviner, yet condemn Sufi Islam. For others only forms of Islamic healing (including isolation and the listening of cassette sermon tapes) are permissible, and biomedicine (which has a long Islamic history¹⁷⁷) is warned against. One example of the way many people interact with and encounter mysticism, is perhaps by participating in a collective prayer for rain reminiscent of pre-Islamic Cushitic practices honouring the god *waq*, they do not frame such practices as such. Instead this example of collective prayer was described to me in ways that echo the beliefs *sitaat* women explained; that it is not known when God will listen to your prayer, thus the more people praying together for the same thing the more likely He is to hear it.

¹⁷⁷ For example, see Musallam (1983) on birth control in the classical Islamic world.

I met many women who practice both a mystic form of Islam and a textually informed Islam; including Fowsia. Fowsia follows what many in Somaliland call traditional Islamic practice by communicating with spirits and serving as a practicing *faliye*. Additionally she chews *qaat* to help reach a state of religious ecstasy (and to have fun), she has been a central member in many *sitaat* groups in Djibouti and Somaliland, and she accompanied me to several Sufi tombs introducing me to her friends. At the same time she never misses a prayer, she carries a 'pocket' Quran and prayer beads in her purse, she can often be found reciting the *Tasbih of Fatimah*¹⁷⁸ with her prayer beads, and she fasts during Ramadan. None of these are 'proof' of Fowsia's piety and spirituality, or lack thereof; instead what her actions show is that for those who follow a more mystical tradition of Islam, prayer, reading the Quran, and fasting are part of following correct Islamic practice. However, for many Somalis Fowsia's mystical practices suggest she is not following correct Islamic practice. Instead what Fowsia shows is that even women of an older generation work to create a balance between seemingly divergent understandings and practices of Islam through a folding in of multiple moralities .

These divisive 'lines' of what is deemed "correct," or not, are very important for both *sitaat* and *Qoys Kaab* women. To dabble in the mystical can be dangerous, and many people keep their mystical practices secret or closely guarded. For example, it was acceptable for me to tell friends and acquaintances that I was attending a *sitaat* session or visiting a Sufi tomb, yet it was not acceptable for me to openly talk about my experiences with divination. Visits to diviners required secrecy and keeping a low profile (which is difficult when you are a tall, white, American woman). Only a handful of my friends knew I ever visited diviners, and some of them expressed grave concern for my safety amongst the world of spirits. Others expressed concerns about my safety for even dabbling in the mystical. When I had an amulet made, Basr refused to let the sheikh wrap it in black string since it would be too 'obvious' and might attract gossip. Additionally, many friends explained that they too once visited Sufi tombs, and attended *siyaaro*; however they now felt that the guarders of the tombs, sorts of 'bastions' of Sufism in Somaliland, had lost their way. Ismaaciil, who drove me to many of the tombs and joined me while I met with those who guard the tombs, often described how Sufis 'used' to be, but reassured me that the guards of the tombs we met were not like they were, they had become "corrupted"

¹⁷⁸ The beads are often used to keep count while saying the "Tasbih of Fatimah", a form of prayer offered as a gift by the Prophet to his daughter Fatimah.

and “greedy” in their demands of *qaat*, cigarettes, and money to be allowed to even visit the tombs¹⁷⁹. Ismaaciil enjoyed coming to the tombs with me; he explained that he liked visiting the places he had been on *siyaaro* before the war. At the same time, Ismaaciil felt he could not tell his wife that we were visiting tombs; he explained he had recently recruited her to join the Tablighi Jamaat¹⁸⁰ and he was afraid of her reaction if she found out. Members of the Tablighi Jamaat reject the veneration of saints, visiting shrines and tombs, and observing rituals associated with (Somali) Sufi practice (including *sitaat*). This shows that the lines of demarcation between correct and incorrect Islamic practice are not clear, yet they are consciously deliberated and can have real consequences including the potential for marital disputes.

Although *sitaat* and *Qoys Kaab* women may position themselves, and represent themselves, as ideologically different according to what they describe as ‘correct’ Islam, they may have more similarities as well as differences. Despite the fact that *sitaat* women tend to be from an older generation and *Qoys Kaab* women tend to be younger, young women can and do attend *sitaat* gatherings. Furthermore *Qoys Kaab* has aspirations to hold classes for divorced mothers. Instead of acting as an “axis of difference” (Masquelier (2005a), generation as a category is more fluid in experiences of “loss and powerlessness,” or “vanished hopes¹⁸¹” (ibid. 73) in Somaliland. Old and young women have both experienced loss and powerlessness along with varying degrees of despair despite differences in age and life experience.

There remains a collective memory of violence and trauma experienced during the Barre regime and passed through generations. Additionally, the older generation of *sitaat* women faced barriers to their Quranic and ‘secular’ education; similar to the struggles of younger *Qoys Kaab* women who are the first post-war generation to enter an education system that is still in the process of rebuilding. Both generations of women still encounter resistance from some men about their education, and negotiate their intellect in relation to their (potential) husband’s. They both carry the burden of domestic duties which impact

¹⁷⁹ Soares suggests that in Niore, Mali it is considered “good,” “morally correct” and “potentially meritorious” to give gifts to religious leaders (particularly those at Sufi tombs). His informants understand gift giving to be an exchange of goods for religious alms (2005, 167), unlike my informants who considered the expectation of “gifts” or goods at Sufi tombs to be morally wrong and greedy.

¹⁸⁰ See Chapter 3 for more on the Tablighi Jamaat.

¹⁸¹ Masquelier (2005a) suggests that generation has become a dividing category, replacing class, as a principle of consciousness and mobilisation.

access to education. They are both affected by male peers going abroad for ‘better’ opportunities; whether through scholarship or migration. They are both impacted by conservative Islamist movements; whether it’s the Muslim Brotherhood or Salafist Al-Shabaab. And, they are both affected by international politics calling for greater gender ‘equality;’ whether through Barre’s Scientific Socialism¹⁸² or UN and Human Rights organisations.

Additionally, both groups of women share the same values (spirituality, piety, materialism, love, romance, knowledge) and they seek to cultivate the same virtues (benevolence, generosity, and solidarity). They’ve both created sisterhoods and seek to deepen their relationship with God. I do not suggest that they are unequivocally the same, and I acknowledge that they understand and practice Islam differently. It is important to note that more research needs to be conducted to further understand the differences between the groups. When I asked about the ways *sitaat* women failed to ‘understand’ Islam (and vice versa for *Qoys Kaab* women) each group responded that the other has misunderstood certain aspects of the Quran. *Sitaat* women explained this is because younger women are too “conservative” (often referring to dress), and *Qoys Kaab* women explained this is because older women did not have the education and knowledge needed to “fully” read and understand the Quran. Neither suggested that the other misunderstood social censures of sacred law, indicating a hierarchical relationship between text and subjective experience.

The two groups seek to cultivate the same virtues, and are influenced by the same values; virtues and values that are being lived in a new historical moment and are interacting with new religious and political forces. Many people told me, including *sitaat* women and personal communication with Ahmed Awale (October 2014), that *sitaat* is “dying out” and that younger women aren’t joining anymore. In contrast, in personal communication with Marja Tiilikainen (February 2017), she suggested that the practice is still lively and attracting young women in the countryside. Further research is needed to explore the urban/rural dimensions of the practice in the current day.

¹⁸² A policy platform built on socialist principles that were intended to promote public acceptance of the Barre regime. Barre argued that the revolution (referring to his coup d’état) was intended to “...to guide us back to our true Somali characteristics ... [and to] a nationalism of oneness”, and that ‘scientific socialism’ was essentially flexible and non-dogmatic. However, the Marxist intellectuals that helped develop this political philosophy were “sidelined, arrested or exiled” when their commitment to these revolutionary principles became “inconvenient” (Walls 2011, 119).

In emphasising the ways in which *sitaat* and *Qoys Kaab* women converge, rather than diverge, across generations I am not discounting that youth are in a “privileged category” of inclusion and exclusion that characterizes their social situation (Masquelier 2005a, 73). Youth are situated on the borderlands where the “global meets the local” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000, 308) due to modern technologies allowing for greater connectivity, dialogue, and hopeful imaginaries. This is perhaps most evident in the urban-elite youth who are heavily influenced by their youthful counterparts abroad (who often return during the summer holidays). Many Somali youth who return for the summer (and sometimes longer) are labelled *dhaqan celis*, or those who are seen to have “lost their culture” (Hammond 2015, 61) signifying a cultural othering between the local and the diasporic (Taitt 2017). For many the *dhaqan celis* also represent the modern and fashionable ways of today, as well as “the disrespectfulness of modern bright, young people” (Masquelier 2005a, 73). One security guard at a popular hotel remarked to me he wished those “refugees¹⁸⁵” would return home after a group of ill-behaved young Somali-British men walked past. Elders often express that many of the Hargeisa youth adopt bad behaviours of some *dhaqan celis* and young ‘refugees’ (including listening to music at mixed gender cafes, smoking marijuana, drinking, and disrespecting elders). At the same time such connectivity holds many opportunities for young Hargeisians.

In what follows I explain how both *sitaat* and *Qoys Kaab* are spaces of moral becoming that implicitly teach women the virtues needed to live an ethical life. Additionally, in the creation of sisterhoods, they learn the skills and abilities needed for successful family and marriage life, and they create a closeness with God.

5.6 Moral becoming and ethical self-cultivation

Sitaat and *Qoys Kaab* are spaces filled with experimentation, negotiation, and discussion of the everyday realities women encounter. These activities through which women find balance contribute to a process of moral becoming. It is through this space that women create sisterhoods, both with the other members of the group, and with the divine. Thus, women not only learn the skills and abilities needed to deal with everyday life, they also experience a form of transcendence felt through a divine gaze predicated on knowing oneself.

¹⁸⁵ Visiting Somalis are sometimes derogatorily referred to as refugees.

Sahra, a woman in her 50s who regularly attends *sitaat*, has a tumultuous family life and relies heavily on the support of her *sitaat* sisters, and the feeling of escape she feels when with them. Watching Sahra at *sitaat* you wouldn't know that her husband has been beating her for "as long as she can remember." He physically and verbally abuses her on a regular basis, she tells me in Basr's living room, surrounded by other *sitaat* women, Basr, and Basr's mother.

Sahra's face is friendly with deep wrinkles around her eyes and on her forehead. Her hands are dry and tough, and every time I see her she is wearing a coloured *dirac* and *shalmad*. During the day she sells *qaat* at a wooden stall, on the road near the market. She usually sits under a flimsy umbrella for shade, and keeps her *qaat* protected from the sun and heat under a burlap sack. She has told me she married young and had many children, but I don't really know much more. She's only opened up about her marriage because she knew I was researching women's relationships, and she was happy I also enjoyed *sitaat*.

She explained that her husband beats her because she attends *sitaat* with her friends. He says that the houses *sitaat* take place in are brothels, and he calls them prostitutes for "playing"¹⁸⁶ after sunset; but in reality the sessions end at the Maghreb call to prayer and Sahra is often home just after sunset. Only sometimes does she return later, perhaps if she gets something to eat with the other women, or has a cup of tea before leaving. I knew this night she would be home after the Isha'a¹⁸⁷ prayer.

She says she first learned about *sitaat*, and was taken to her first gathering by her mother-in-law, her husband's mother. She laughs at the irony of this as she says it. She says, with part embarrassment and part pride, that the other women have helped her a lot. Her son went on *tahriib* (illegal migration) without telling anyone, and she only knew what had happened to him when she got a call from a smuggler in Libya. The smuggler demanded \$1,000 be wired to him or else he would kill her son. Sahra was distraught and didn't know what to do. Her husband doesn't work and she could never pay the bribe on the money she makes from selling *qaat*. Plus, her husband has turned their other sons against her and

¹⁸⁶ *Sitaat* singing, dancing, and clapping is called *ciyaar*, which translates to "playing" and is distinct from dancing.

¹⁸⁷ The night prayer, usually between 7-8 pm in Somaliland depending on the time of year.

she couldn't ask them for help. The *sitaat* women collected money to help Sahra and now her son lives in Europe.

The *sitaat* women have also given Sahra advice on how to deal with her abusive husband. That night, in Basr's living room, they were encouraging her to leave him. We discuss, as a group, her options: *does she have a sister she can stay with? Where are her brothers, can't they intervene? What about her sons, they can't let this happen!?* She explains that she can't stay with anyone else, her family won't help her, and her husband turned her sons against her. She doesn't explain more, instead she tells me that her *sitaat* group have walked her home, tried to speak to her husband, tried to prove she isn't a prostitute; he doesn't care, nor does he believe them with his dismissal perhaps signalling his desire to control the situation and Sahra's actions.

As we talk, eat dinner, talk some more I can see Sahra change. She becomes fidgety with her hands, playing with her scarf, her body slumps downward, her voice becomes less energetic, and her eyes become more downcast. It is clear she knows that she will be beaten for staying out late, and the longer she stays the worse it will get. We encourage her to head home, and she seems reluctant. I begin to express concern to Basr and her mother, but they tell me she will be okay. They arrange for their nephew to drive her home; I don't see Sahra again for several days and when I do, she doesn't have to say anything. We both know what happened when she got home that night.

Sahra's story highlights that through the support of the sisterhood she finds comfort, release, escape, and she consciously deliberates her life circumstances. She draws on the skills and knowledge of the sisterhood to not only help pay a migration smuggler, but to also cultivate the confidence to ask her family for help or to potentially one day leave her husband. She is a recipient of their benevolence, generosity, and solidarity, without which she might not be able to cope with the "tests" God has given her.

She attends *sitaat* three to four times a week, and takes part in the women's professional group that travels the country performing *baraanbur* at weddings. In addition to the sisterhood of this world, Sahra has created a connection with her divine sisters. Sahra's praise of Fadumo, Khadija, and Xawa and their humanity, wifeness, daughterhood, and motherhood creates chains of blessings. As she praises them, they bless and protect her.

She enters into a dialectical relationship where her selfhood is transcendent and dependent on these divine women. She receives peace, comfort, and tranquillity through *ciyaar* and praise, feelings she can only identify by knowing herself.

Through *ciyaar* and praise Sahra also creates a sense of oneness, or *wahda*, with God. *Sitaat* involves alternating between playing and prayer, both forms of praise, and both means of blessings, and for God to hear and respond to one's needs. As Sahra joins in collective recitation of prayer during the session, and the group performance of *salat* during the Maghreb prayer after the session, she knows that her prayers are more likely to be heard. Many *sitaat* groups performed collective prayer for my conversion to Islam, they said they could feel that I was one of them. They are only able to identify and understand such a feeling sent from God if they first know themselves. And, knowing oneself, according to many *sitaat* women, is learned through 'playing' and praise.

The *Qoys Kaab* women follow a similar format: lessons are interspersed with moments of collective prayer and followed by group participation in *salat* at Maghreb. I patiently and respectfully listened while Nada often led group prayers for my conversion because she could see that I belonged (through my behaviour, dress, and commitment to the lessons). Whilst the *Qoys Kaab* students were explicitly learning the skills and abilities needed to enter marriage, motherhood and family life, the *sitaat* women were learning the skills and abilities needed to deal with the problems already existing in their married and family life. *Qoys Kaab* is, in a way, pre-empting some of the difficulties women face in marriage and family by teaching the women at a different phase in the life course. At the same time, women gain a sisterhood earlier, a sisterhood that they can call on for guidance when needed. Nada is their fictive 'mama' and someone who takes pride in nurturing the students' intellect and skills. She has created divine sisterhood in naming the different classes after the first women of Islam, thus emulating the virtues Fadumo, Khadija, and Xawa represent in the students.

Nada has taught the students a strong sense of self, whether through lessons on their health, keeping a home, beauty, or personality development. This cultivation of the first person is not only predicated on the gaze of men, as I showed in Chapter 4, but also predicated on the gaze of the sisterhood and God. The students are conscious that they are representatives of *Qoys Kaab*, and aware of how their classmates and Nada, their

fictive kin, will view them. Through this first and third person cultivation of the ethical self, women desire to do 'good' for their fictive kin, to be viewed favourably. For example, Hodan, a midwifery student and one of the first *Qoys Kaab* graduates, gave a lecture titled "Keep Calm and Keep your Virginity". She was proud of her knowledge and wanted to teach the students to not only "be good" by staying a virgin until the wedding night, but she also included technical drawings of the WHO classifications of FGC. She wanted to teach the students about themselves too, so they could identify and recognise the 'type' of FGC they had. Hodan's 'good' act of teaching was predicated on the students' reciprocal enthusiasm, understanding, and approval of her lesson. Additionally, the self-knowledge produced through lessons like Hodan's is important in identifying and understanding signs, feelings, or guidance from God. For example, a woman needs to know her body in order to distinguish between love and lust for her boyfriend; feelings of love and lust being sent by God.

Thus far I have given examples that show the straightforward success of *sitaat* and *Qoys Kaab* in teaching 'sisters' certain skills and abilities, as well as virtues. However, sometimes there is tension between fictive kin, and women make small negotiations with each other. Including these tensions in my descriptions is important because it shows that sometimes the dialectical relationship between the self and the other stalls, and requires explicit attention. It is also important to note that 'fictive kin' and 'self and other' are two different dialectical relationships as will become evident in what follows.

In both *sitaat* and *Qoys Kaab* I observed the 'mother' come around and fix women's hijabs or tell them to cover their bare feet, conscious of the divine gaze. During the Galbiley



Photograph 6: Kalabayd *sitaat* house (circled in red) and light of Faduumo (circled in yellow)

sitaat group's annual pilgrimage to the light of Faduumo, in Kalabayd, I observed the *sitaat* leader conducting 'patrols' around the room, pulling our hijabs tighter, indicating if she could see our bare feet, and indicating when our neat rows were lost. She wouldn't let any of the women 'play' even though several of them stood up, to be quickly shoved right back down by the leader. In controlling our bodies and how we acted, the leader was able to find balance in a tension brought to a head before we set off for the *siyaaro*.

The women visit this particular site because they believe the light of Faduumo shines from a tree¹⁸⁸. Only certain women are able to see this light, and it is significant because the light symbolizes the spirit of Faduumo. The small *sitaat* house was built so the women could come together and praise Faduumo through *sitaat* and by slaughtering two sheep. The *siyaaro* was nearly cancelled that morning because religious elders opposed the praise of anyone other than the Prophet, and the annual slaughter of a sheep for anything other than Eid. The leader had to quickly negotiate with the religious elders the intent and plan for the *siyaaro*, including no longer calling it a *siyaaro*. By the time we headed off that afternoon we were simply 'visiting' the light of Faduumo, we ensured that we were not making the visit on the same day as the previous year, and we weren't slaughtering on the same day as the previous year. Last year the 'visit' was a week earlier. Although the religious elders weren't happy, they were satisfied that these 'technicalities' had been resolved; and as we headed to the light of Faduumo the women made ululations and sang praise songs. We were forced to re-negotiate the 'mystical' nature of *sitaat* with the revivalist Islam promoted by male religious elders.

Tension was also found in *Qoys Kaab*, specifically when Nada pulled my hijab tight under my chin before Sheikh Mohamed Gadhle arrived to give our lecture on *meher*. She explained to me that he "doesn't like to see your [my] neck". I observed women who usually wear the hijab arrive in the *jilbaab*, and women who usually wear the *jilbaab* wearing the *niqaab*. Nada prepped us to look appropriate through her own fixing of her *abaaya* and hijab; we all reflexively followed suit and adjusted ourselves every time she adjusted. Nada was worried how a knowledgeable authority on God would view us. It was important because Nada needed him on our side; if he felt we were doing anything 'un-

¹⁸⁸ The pastoral women who attend this *sitaat* do not believe the explanation of the Gabiley women. According to the pastoral women they have never seen the light of Faduumo, they suggest maybe it was a reflection of the eyes of a hyena in the glow of the moon. They explain that the house was primarily used as a gathering space for women in the community to learn the Quran from a female teacher, but the teacher recently passed away. Now the pastoral women gather during the annual *sitaat* pilgrimage to give blessings to their former Quranic teacher.

Islamic' he would have the power to shut down the school. Thus, we weren't only worried about his gaze, we were worried about His divine gaze working through the Sheikh.

As sites of moral becoming, *Sitaat* gatherings and *Qoys Kaab* classes are places where women negotiate, balance, and support each other through the process of cultivating ethical selves. This process is predicated on a relationship between the first and third person self, where ethics is embedded in the social and depends on the presence of the sisterhood and the divine. Women learn the skills and abilities needed in marriage and family, and they gain a support network, guidance, and a space of relaxation and escape in the process. The learning of these skills and abilities enables women to deal with unexpected realities, whether in the present (*sitaat* women who are already married), or the near future (*Qoys Kaab* women who are preparing themselves for marriage).

5.7 "New" morality

It is through the relationship of the sisterhoods women create and the introduction of the gaze of the divine in the process of ethical self-cultivation that the inward, outward and upward movements of the life course become illuminated. As women get to know themselves, they move outward through explicit learning of skills and abilities in the sisterhood, and they move upward in the implicit learning of the virtues of benevolence, generosity, and solidarity through divine sisterhood. They also move upward as they communicate with the first ladies of Islam and God through praise and prayer. These actions bring them closer to the divine, and allow for the divine to send signs, feelings, and guidance redirecting the outward inward, and indicating their dialectical relationship.

In addition to illuminating the entanglement of movements of the life course, both sisterhoods show that projects of ethical self-formation demand a new morality, a morality that supports and recognises the values important to women, young and old. This thesis seeks to contextualise a folding in of moralities that young, urban women seek in the global Islamic revivalist movement, however, not as a chain reaction to events; rather as a form of postcolonial Islam dictating what it means to be modern through moral arguments that requires cultural and social institutions to adapt and change.

Both sisterhoods are embedded in social relationships that are crucial to their sense of self. Both sisterhoods have also shown ways that they are purposeful actors who respond to,

and contribute, new ideas and arguments within their social histories. The *sitaat* women in Gabiley collected resources to build a women's mosque, something unheard of at the time. *Qoys Kaab* women are shaping the kind of love, marriage, and family they want according to influences on TV, Facebook, and family abroad.

For the women who attend *sitaat* and *Qoys Kaab*, this world may be centred in familial relationships. In *sitaat* gatherings women ask for divine and group blessings for matters of the family, the sisterhood collectively helps women deal with domestic relationships, and the women learn virtues intended to help them fulfil successful mother, wife, and daughter roles. In *Qoys Kaab* classes the young women learn how to select a husband, be a good wife, and how to be a good mother. The world of these young women may be centred "in the sphere of the family, but in the process the women gain a gradual recognition that the care of intimate others demands negotiation, problematisation, and sometimes direct confrontation with institutions and with modes of everyday community life" (Mattingly 2014b, 207).

Neither *sitaat* nor *Qoys Kaab* explicitly sets out to challenge patriarchal institutions. In fact they face resistance (like the foundation stories for the *sitaat* women in Gabiley and for Nada of *Qoys Kaab*), and seek to achieve a balance between their understanding and practice of Islam (whether 'mystical' or 'revival'), as well as between male authorities of Islamic knowledge, and purveyors of Somali 'culture.' The sisterhoods did not intend to upset them or threaten their power, but they did in the very nature of female gatherings where women debate and discuss the kinds of lives they want to live.

For example, in the opening vignette for this thesis I cite a *Qoys Kaab* lecture by CabdiNasser titled "Things Women Do that Men Hate." One slide read:

Xuquuqaha....

- *Xaqarabikuguleeyahay*
- *Xaqaxaaskukuguleeyahay*
- *Xaqaruuxda(naftaadu) kuguleedahay*
- *Saddexdanxuquuqood mid kastawaxa la rabaainaadsideeda u gadatounafuliso, adigooraaacayahabka ay shareecaddeenutilmaamayso.*

Rights.....

- *Right for God*
- *Right for Spouse*
- *Right for the soul*
- *Every one of these three rights needs to be fulfilled though the Sharia of Islam*

What CabdiNasser meant was that every person, under Islam, has the right to worship Allah, the right to find a husband/wife, and the right to develop themselves. He expanded on this idea, suggesting that women should only have three types of relationships: (1) a relationship with Allah, (2) a relationship with their husband, and (3) a relationship with themselves. He also warned us against female friendships:

“They [women] don’t always have our best interest at heart, they may be jealous, they may lead us astray from our other relationships through bad behaviour,” my notebook reads.

His words show us that creating and sustaining sisterhoods is a moral act. *Sitaat* and *Qoys Kaab* were created by women, led by women, and all the students were women. Both groups meet every week to learn how to better themselves and how to become closer with God. The sisterhoods, by their very existence, demand institutional change that recognizes the capacity of women and women’s organisations.

5.8 Discussion

In this chapter I have shown that sisterhoods are understood in many ways, including through clan and prophet lineage as evidenced in the Gabiley women’s family tree, divine kinship with the first ladies of Islam, and fictive kinship where a female leader takes on the role of the a group mother. These sisterhoods differ from those of the hierarchical kinship relations that stem from marriage, specifically through the peer relationship of *sitaat* and *Qoys Kaab* sisterhoods.

Women’s benevolence and generosity are evidenced through acts of emotional, domestic, and monetary support. In Borama the sisterhood emotionally support Sahra, and have even offered financial support in times of need. For the *Qoys Kaab* sisterhood benevolence and generosity are expressed through young women’s and local expert’s repeated attendance. By attending they are supporting Nada’s ‘mission’ of explicitly teaching young women the skills and values needed for a successful marriage and family, and they are

indirectly challenging detractors who worry about women in positions of potential collective power.

Women's solidarity is evidenced by their willingness to risk scorn, contempt, and discontent with their husband's, religious elders, and male community leaders. The *sitaat* women are willing to negotiate the ways that they understand and articulate their annual pilgrimage to the light of Faduumo as a *siyaaro* to simply an annual gathering. This has real political implications for the ways that they enact their spirituality in the community, and according to the gaze of male religious elders. Similarly, Nada pressed on with *Qoys Kaab* classes even though many members of the community were angered. She negotiated with her detractors by inviting them to classes as a means to win their approval and support.

In the spaces that sisterhoods create women undergo processes of ethical self-cultivation include the learning of virtues, skills, and abilities from the sisterhoods to which they belong. I have argued that although *sitaat* and *Qoys Kaab* are seemingly very different, they are actually 'doing' the same thing; specifically teaching women the virtues of benevolence, generosity, and solidarity, as well as giving women the skills and abilities needed to create a successful marriage and family (and to deal with the realities they may face in marriage and family life).

Sisterhoods give women the support to act on the 'correct' knowledge they have gained. They support women as they prepare for life transitions, and when they encounter the unexpected realities of love, marriage, motherhood, and family. The sisterhoods are practical and devotional; they teach practical action through a spiritual framework. They also teach women how they 'should' act, and then help them when they deviate from the correct path. Correcting women's behaviour is an important aspect of the sisterhoods. The older and more experienced, or expert, women may discuss a specific woman's case and they will either collectively work to correct the situation or the 'mother' will guide the woman in question back to the right path.

Women as leaders and teachers of Quranic and spiritual knowledge is not new, as the Gabiley women showed when they built their mosque; however, in the current trend towards revivalist Islam there are few female Somali Quranic teachers and religious leaders (that are validated through the eyes of male sheikhs and elders). This is not to suggest that

women aren't capable of becoming religious teachers and leaders, nor is it to suggest that they don't have the knowledge to teach and lead. Rather, it is to argue that the sisterhoods subvert hierarchies of spiritual understanding and practice. They also challenge the commonly held belief and practice that women's spiritual understanding and practice should be mediated through men's 'superior' Islamic knowledge. The sisterhoods locate women as experts and points of first contact in questions regarding Islamic practice. Their very existence subverts teachings, particularly CabdiNassir's, that female communities and sisterhoods are a danger to correct pious practice.

The *sitaat* sisterhoods have, in a way, 'proven' the power of female relationships given that they have existed in practice for much longer than the *Qoys Kaab* sisterhood. *Qoys Kaab* is a new phenomenon, and hasn't yet been able to develop cultural depth. As of now it is not clear if generations of women will desire or even need the explicit teachings that *Qoys Kaab* provides. It is possible that the current form of *Qoys Kaab* will evolve into something more like *sitaat*, where women in the midst of motherhood and family life will come together for social respite and to deepen their spiritual practice. As long as *Qoys Kaab* continues to get popular support and media presence it will continue to evolve to meet the growing needs of young women, and over time it will be important to identify the ways that the sisterhood has transformed and the ways that the demands women place on it have also transformed.

For women, the gaze of the world is not only that of men, but also extends to include (divine) sisterhoods and the gaze of God. Women are conscious of the ways that they are perceived, thus influencing the dialectical relationship between the first and third person subjectivities in ethical self-cultivation. This further illustrates the inward, outward, and upward directions of the life course. A woman's subjective "I" in ethical self-cultivation moves outward for the gaze of the world to perceive, and she is aware of that perception, indicating a simultaneous moving inward. At the same time, women deepen their relationship with God through *sitaat* and *Qoys Kaab*, thus illustrating an upward movement of the life course towards the divine.

Chapter 6: The divine: divination, dua istikhara, and destiny

The sessions

Session 1: Sheikh Mohammed

Borama

I sat on the cement floor, with my back against the cracking cement wall. Basr was next to me, and Awrala was next to her, closest to the open door. The room was dim and the bright light shining through the door hurt my eyes. Sheikh Mohammed was seated across from me and next to him was an old man without teeth.

The Sheikh asked why we came to visit him. Basr explained that we each had questions for him about our relationships, about our futures, about our destinies. The Sheikh nodded his head, and replied “mmm...mmm...mmm.”

He looked at me, signalling that I was to be first. I was nervous, I didn't even want him to read my destiny, I only wanted to listen to what he told Basr and Awrala; but they said I had to ask him about my relationship at the time and my PhD. I refused to ask about my PhD, too scared he might say I wouldn't finish or pass, and settled on finding out about my love life instead.

Next to us in the room a toothless old man, who had remained silent thus far, loudly and methodically pounded *qaat* leaves with a mortar and pestle. He stuffed a palm full of mushy *qaat* into his cheek and began making sucking noises as he enjoyed the leaves.

Sheikh Mohammed grunted as he sorted through papers in a nearby cabinet, eventually finding a worn brown book. He returned to his seat and rubbed dust from its cover. There was a lion of Judah embossed on the cover. He opened the book, and repeated my name and my mother's name. He turned the pages, stopped and skimmed words which were unintelligible to me. The writing on the pages was a mix of Arabic and symbols I didn't know.

He ran his finger over a passage and mumbled, “mmm...mmm...mmm.”

He took a deep breath, looked at me, and began.

Session 2: Ubax

Hargeisa

I sat on Basr's floor, tired from the *sitaat* gathering she had hosted. It was a small gathering led by Fowzia and consisted of a few of Basr's friends, the house girls, and me. We danced, clapped, drummed, sang. Fowzia and Basr's friends Siham and Ubax chained smoked and chewed *qaat* the entire time.

The drumming stopped when the Maghreb call to prayer sounded. I knew this signalled the women would pray and leave. None of the women prepared to pray, nobody secured their hijab or rinsed the *qaat* from their mouths as make-do ablutions.

Basr had told me one of the ladies could speak to spirits; she wanted both of us to get a second opinion after Sheikh Mohammad's reading. She turned to me and said "we have to ask Ubax to read our destinies now, otherwise she will leave." I agreed. It felt urgent to get a second opinion.

Basr leaned closer to Ubax, explaining that we would like her to speak to our spirits, we wanted her to tell us our destiny. The fee, \$5 each, was negotiated and Ubax told Basr what she needed.

Basr stood and walked towards the kitchen, leaving me with Ubax and the other *sitaat* women. Ubax continued to chew, sometimes closing her eyes like you do when you take a bite of something delicious. I sat self-consciously with my knees drawn to my chest, waiting, suddenly too nervous to think of something to say to the other *sitaat* women.

After what felt like ages Basr returned with burning incense. I looked at Basr, signalling to her that I was nervous. Basr looked at Ubax, urging me to watch what she was doing.

In a low voice she began my reading.

Session 3: Fowzia

Hargeisa

Basr suggested Fowzia read our destiny. It seemed like a good idea. Fowzia was always entertaining to be around and it seemed 'low-risk' for her to read our destiny, especially after the intense experiences with Sheikh Mohammad and Ubax.

I spent the afternoon at Basr's, relaxing, drinking tea, with Fowzia chain smoking and chewing *qaat*. I had supplied the cigarettes and *qaat* for Fowzia this time. By late afternoon Fowzia had smoked a packet of cigarettes and was nearly done with her bundle of *qaat*. She was on her way to another world.

After some prompting from Basr Fowzia rummaged through her old purse and pulled out a handful of cowrie shells. With her other hand she stuffed another bunch of *qaat* leaves into her mouth. As she chewed she shook the cowrie shells, like you would a pair of dice. She threw them on the floor, immediately said part of my destiny, collected them, shook them, threw them, told Basr part of her destiny, collected them, shook them, threw them, told me part of my destiny. She alternated between Basr's destiny and mine, almost as if our destinies were part of one narrative. She moved quickly, much more quickly than the other diviners. It was like gambling, the speed at which she threw the shells, called our destiny, and collected them for another round.

Shake...

Throw...

Destiny...

Shake...

Throw...

Destiny...

Just like a game.

Session 4: Khadra

Hargeisa

Basr told me about Khadra long before we went to visit her. She said Khadra had prepared “special” water and herbs for her. Khadra arranged for a Sheikh to bless them and then gave them to Basr with strict instructions of how to use the water.

It took some time to arrange my meeting with Khadra. She speaks to spirits from her home and it’s best to visit when her husband is “out,” wherever that may be. It also took time because Khadra needed to learn about me. She asked Basr details about my life, and she needed to speak to her spirits to see if I was “good.” When she connected with her spirits and they told her I was “good,” she called Basr to tell me to come.

Again, Basr accompanied me. She wanted to collect a new bottle of water, without the herbs this time. Basr complained that the herbs tasted bad. As we drove to Khadra’s house late that afternoon, the nearly full bottle of special water rolled around the floor of Basr’s tiny car.

We turned off the main *Jigjigayar* road and started bouncing through muddy potholes dodging taxis.

We parked in front of Khadra’s gate and were met with happy screams from Khadra’s two children. We looked around and saw them crouched in the window, holding onto the metal bars, almost like caged animals. She took us to her sitting room. There were no windows and she didn’t turn the light on. The walls were a faded pistachio green mixed with kids’ handprints. She motioned for us to sit on cushions that had lost their shape and she sat on the tile floor across from us.

After asking about Basr’s rejected “special” water she confirmed she prepared a new bottle without the herbs. She left the room to get it and when she handed the new bottle to Basr you could tell there weren’t any herbs, the water didn’t have a green tint to it. Khadra explained that she got a Sheikh to bless the water, again, and that Basr needs to throw a handful over her right shoulder before she prays.

She said she knew I was coming so she was able to prepare for my visit, she had already contacted my spirits; they were waiting. She fanned a small sum of money I had pulled from my purse in front of her to communicate with the spirits.

I asked my first question.

Session 5: 'Mama'

Arabsiyo

Yasmiin told me about a *faliye* who lives in Arabsiyo, a *faliye* her grandmother and mother also visit. She said that if I could arrange a car to the diviner she would show us the way; she has something she needs to ask too.

I arrange for Basr to drive, I know she will want further proof and exploration of what the spirits say.

It was difficult finding 'Mama,' she lived outside of the main Arabsiyo village. Yasmiin explained that the village didn't like Mama's divination powers and had shunned her to the outskirts. She said it didn't stop villagers from visiting Mama from time to time, they just wanted to keep her at a distance.

We eventually found a hamlet with a thorn fence. There were two separate cinderblock, single room houses. Outside there were two women hanging clothes who stopped to watch us.

Basr approached them and asked if Mama lived here. They pointed to a third house, the largest multi-room house in the hamlet.

We walked towards Mama's house, when we saw an old woman usher an old man away from us, hurrying him so he wouldn't see us. After she shoved him around the corner she returned to us and silently waved us to a room.

We filed into her bedroom and sat on cushions at the end of the bed. We waited.

The old woman returned and we figured it was Mama. She shut the door and explained that the old man was her husband and she didn't want him to know we were here. She had a feeling we were coming today, her spirits had told her a group would come, she had been waiting.

She asked who would go first, and my friend went to sit beside her.

Mama was slight, wrinkled, and laughed a lot.

She pulled thin wood sticks from her dress. As Yasmiin explained her situation and asked Mama for help, Mama snapped the sticks into six evenly sized pieces. She gathered the sticks in her hand then threw them on the floor. She studied the way they fell and then spoke. She repeated this until my friend had asked all her questions.

When Yasmiin had finished Basr moved to sit beside Mama. There were moments Mama and Basr were in serious discussion and moments when they laughed. I could see Mama throwing the sticks after each of Basr's questions.

Eventually Basr got up and it was my turn.

Session 6: Sheikh Musa

Arabsiyo

It was Mama who took us to Sheikh Musa. He is also in Arabsiyo, but closer to the market and the village centre. Mama explained that Sheikh Musa would be able to make something to help Basr and me with our respective concerns.

Basr collected Mama from her house and she directed us to Sheikh Musa's house. Mama sat in the front seat leaning forward, nearly putting her forehead on the windshield, directing us where to turn. We drove past a group of secondary school children, I covered my face with my scarf so we wouldn't draw their attention and they wouldn't follow where we went.

We easily found Sheikh Musa's house and parked outside a tall cinderblock fence. We entered and found chickens wandering, a giant hole for rubbish to be burned, and an old man with bright orange hair. He glared at us until Mama introduced us, when he softened and with a disfigured foot led us around his house and under a tree. There was a plastic woven mat already under the tree and he motioned for us to sit on it.

Basr immediately explained why we came to him; we wanted him to talk to our spirits. We wanted him to help us with our destinies; we were each in moments of crisis.

He turned to me first, withdrew an old notebook and pen from a small bag, and asked my name and my mother's name. He wrote our names in Arabic, as Basr sounded them out letter by letter.

Sheikh Musa, referring to an aged book he kept in his bag, told me a destiny I had heard versions of before. I explained to him the difficulties I was having with the destiny I had been told. There was a conflict. Basr suggested he make something to help me overcome the conflict, to help me achieve a destiny she so desperately wanted me to have. He grunted and agreed.

Sheikh Musa tore a piece of notebook paper from his book and began writing in Arabic. He wrote slowly, laboriously. He filled an entire page. He folded the page in half, in half again, then again. He folded it evenly and as small as it would go. He took black string from his bag. He began wrapping the paper, methodically, slowly, with focus. After he was halfway through Basr suggested he unwrap it for fear of someone seeing it was an amulet. He agreed and unwrapped the paper, methodically, slowly, and with focus.

Sheikh Musa handed me the folded paper. He said I must speak to the person, hold the amulet in my right hand, and wait for it to work. I needed to do this for about a month.

He held out the amulet and I took it with my right hand.

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I analyse two types of divine intervention women turn to in times of crisis or uncertainty, specifically related to love and marriage. These interventions highlight the intimate relationships women form with the divine, whether through mystic practices like divination, or through more 'accepted' practices like *the dua istikhara*. It is through the lens of divine intimacy that I contextualise the five movements of the life course within the dimension of time. I argue that re-theorizing temporal notions of the life course to extend beyond death and the life of this world enables insight into the phenomenological

experiences of time; specifically that time is not always forward moving, rather it is an entanglement of pasts, presents, and futures. Simultaneously, the potential for conflict during moments of crisis or uncertainty illuminates women's reflection, deliberation, contestation, and negotiation of values in resolving life's problems. When women seek divine intervention they draw on "technologies of the imagination" (Sneath et al. 2009) to envision and enact a hopeful future. By negotiating actualized and experiential selves, women rely on knowledge production to identify divinely ordained signs and symbols that guide them in their love relationships, help them achieve their destinies, and live an ethical life.

Destiny and ethics revisited

Thus far I have ethnographically situated destiny (Chapter 1), and I have shown the ways in which women create a 'oneness' with God as part of their process of ethical self-cultivation (Chapters 4 and 5). Oneness, or unity, with God as part of ethical self-cultivation reveals the ways that individuals are bound by their destiny. God creates one's capacity for action, and it is up to an individual to exert their will to act; thus one has the ability to reflect on how one may or may not act according to the capacity that God has given. This suggests that lived experiences of destiny are reflected in a 'middle ground' where individuals acknowledge God's omnipotence, but they also have the ability to work on, through, and towards their destiny.

Destiny as a middle ground becomes ethnographically illuminated in Somali women's intimate encounters with the divine. In what follows I show how women build unity with God in moments of crisis or uncertainty through divination and the *dua istikhara*. In such moments women consciously reflect, deliberate and act on, through, and towards what they believe to be their destiny; all under the guidance and direction of God.

Understanding signs, symbols, or feelings sent by God is predicated on knowing oneself, and being able to identify His guidance.

6.2 Divine Intervention

Women believe that their destiny can hold many things, including graduating from university, wealth, owning a business, working in an office, or travelling abroad. The hopes women have for their destiny depends on their interests, their family, and their environment; however amongst the women I met, one's destiny always includes love,

marriage, and children. This does not mean that women believe only love, marriage, and children to be their destiny; rather they are simply one part of a larger picture. Many of the students I taught expressed a desire to have as many children “as Allah will give,” but they first wanted to complete their studies. They also expressed uncertainty in what their future may hold, and simultaneously trusted in God’s omnipotence in revealing a future worth working towards.

Many women, young and old, rely on God for guidance towards their destiny. Hibaaq explained that she was at one point uncertain if she should stay in Hargeisa and complete her studies or move abroad with her father. She recited the *dua istikhara* asking for God’s guidance and knew she should stay in Hargeisa after identifying a sign sent from God, which in her case was “scoring the second highest mark on the Somaliland national examination.” This sign was one of personal success and achievement, which convinced her to stay in Hargeisa.

Hibaaq’s recitation of the *dua istikhara*, like other women’s reliance and belief in divination, are both types of divine intervention women draw on when they need guidance acting toward what they believe to be their destiny. For Hibaaq, she believes her destiny involves graduating from university, and after identifying the sign from God she felt certain that he was guiding her towards her correct path. Divine intervention is a form of action: firstly in the decision to seek guidance (an exertion of one’s will within a God given capacity to act), secondly the act of intervention itself (recitation of *dua istikhara*, or narration of troubles to the diviner), and finally in the resulting decisions and actions taken after God’s guidance has been identified or felt (like Hibaaq’s identification of a sign from God after getting an excellent grade and then deciding to stay in Hargeisa).

Achieving one’s destiny--particularly finding love, having a successful marriage, and having many happy, healthy, well-cared for children—can be difficult; and marriage, in particular, is often articulated in a “language of crisis” as far away as Niger (Masquelier 2005a, 77), not only for Somali women. Achieving such successes is dependent on several practical and ethical factors. Has a woman learned the skills and abilities needed to find balance while dating? Has she learned the skills and abilities needed to keep a home and cook the foods her husband likes? Will her Pharaonic FGC lead to unexpected complications during pregnancy or childbirth? Additionally, has she learned the virtues of benevolence,

generosity, and solidarity? Has she acted well in the face of difficulty? Many women explained that acting well can bring good things, although sometimes bad things ‘just happen’ and are tests from God of one’s character; thus women’s journeys of moral becoming and achieving their destiny over the life course are not always easy or straightforward. Sometimes love, marriage, and children may be fleeting in the life of this world and can only be achieved in the “other-life” (*akhira*).

In order to ‘help’ their destiny women call on guidance from God; and in this chapter I analyse two forms of divine intervention women rely on to help them achieve what they believe is their destiny. These two interventions, divination and the *dua istikhara*, reveal the ways that destiny is integral to rethinking life course perspectives. Destiny is acted on during every day decision making about how to act well. Women young and old, rich and poor, university educated or not, all deliberate how their lives could unfold in the near future. When crisis and uncertainty are encountered the faraway future becomes a feature in women’s spiritual imaginary: *how might they live a good life, an ethical life in order to achieve their destiny in the life of the other world?*

6.3 Divination

In Islam divination has a particular place. The Oxford Dictionary of Islam defines it as the “art of knowing that which cannot be known by empirical or rational means,” (Esposito 2003a) suggesting that divination is part of the occult. The Quran condemns such practices (see *surat I-maidah* [The Table spread with Food], verses 5:3 and 5:90¹⁸⁹), and divination is forbidden in Islam,¹⁹⁰ with only the Prophet possessing divinatory abilities (Masad 2008, 105). According to Mohammed Masad, the Prophet is believed to be the “quintessential diviner” whose “prophecies and apocalyptic predications” are included in the hadith, “religious folk stories and anecdotes found in various classical sources” (ibid. 105-106). Masad shows that Ali bin Abi Talib, a member of Ahl al-bayt or the Prophet’s family, continued the divinatory legacy of the Prophet (ibid. 107). He also argues that Ali bin Abi Talib serves as “patron saint of these sciences [prophetic and divinatory]” and “is said to

¹⁸⁹ Corpus.quran.com, accessed 20 September 2016.

¹⁹⁰ *Surat I-maidah* verses 5:3 and 5:90 refer to an Arab divination practice which uses arrows, called *Azlām* (Azlaam). *Azlām* is often (legally) restricted to: (1) Just *Azlām* as the particular prohibited practice, or (2) generalized to include all forms of divination, potentially including *Sihr* (magic) and *kihānah* (soothsaying or divination) (see Fahd 2012 for more on *kihānah*). However, there are other forms and concepts that blend and complicate the matter: e.g. *anwa’*, an Arab astronomical time keeping system with links to Indian astrology, geomancy or “striking of the sand” as a form of divination, as well as prophecies which are quite common in the Sufi tradition.

have handed down the sources of the secret sciences in codes and symbols using a variety of methods known only to those who are expert in these matters” (ibid. 108). Thus many, including Islamic scholars (Ibn Khaldun d. 1406 saw divination as a lower form of divine gift), diviners (including the male diviners I visited), and ‘clients’ (for lack of a better word) consider divination a divine gift and a type of prophecy one is taught.

For many, divination is considered part of a folk religion that combines astrological and magical methods, including “interpretation of dreams, observation of footprints, morphoscopic and genealogical lines, chiromancy, observation of shoulder blades, invocation of celestial bodies, making oneself invisible, incantations, recitation of beautiful divine names, science of Islamic personal prayers, conjuring, catarchic astrology, geomancy, and omens” (Esposito 2003a).

For example, Sheikh Mohammed in Borama presented himself as a methodological scholar of the divine. He was literate in several languages- Somali, Arabic, and some unknown script in one of his referral texts- and he had a ‘library’ of texts and papers organised in his room. At the start of my visit with him he asked my name and my mother’s name, which is somewhat unremarkable. However, after I replied, “Caroline and my mother is called Marcia,” he pulled a worn school notebook from behind him, opened it, and wrote “كارولين” Caroline in Arabic. Basr had to sound out my name, letter by letter for him to get it right. Next he wrote “مارشا” —Marcia—and again Basr sounded it out, letter by letter. Although he wrote our names slowly and it seemed difficult for him to form the letters in Arabic, he was like a school teacher memorizing new students as he repeated our names aloud a few times.

Similarly Sheikh Musa wrote our names in Arabic, and referred to a book much like Sheikh Mohammed’s. As he turned the pages of the book I could see the writing was in Arabic and had some symbols, again like Sheikh Mohamed’s book. When I asked where he got the book and he said from his teacher who got it in the Somali region of Ethiopia. Sheikh Mohammed’s and Sheikh Musa’s scholarly performances support claims that in Islam divination is considered an art and science, or *ulum* (singular ‘*ilm*). For many this places divination equally with mathematics, astronomy, and medicine, all considered ‘*ilm*’ (Islamicus, accessed 21 August 2016).

In Somaliland the practice of divination, diviners themselves, and those who believe in and visit diviners are morally ambiguous. They are at once morally 'wrong' for believing they have the same powers and abilities as God (*shirki*), yet there is truth to acts of divination and the world of spirits as supported by the Quran. Diviners, or *faliye*, who are taught and learn the science of prophecy and divination are more trusted and more reliable than those who are 'called' by the spirits. The opening vignettes show that Sheikh Mohamed of Borama and Sheikh Musa of Arabsiyo rely on books, using codes and symbols to interpret an individual's future. This does not release them from moral indeterminacy as many believe the Prophet is the only diviner; instead their Quranic based interpretations make them the more knowledgeable, trustworthy and reliable in the eyes of clients. Other *faliye* (typically female *faliye*) communicate with spirits, notably reading different symbols in smoke, cowry shells, sticks, or money. For example, during Ubax's reading she relied on a mixture of incense smoke and scents, as well as *qaat* to help her connect with the spirits. As Ubax held the burning incense with one hand she closed her eyes and wafted the smoke towards her with the other. She took several slow deep inhales. Then she took a twig from her bundle of *qaat* and used it to move the incense on the hot coals, creating more smoke. She watched the incense burning, the way it created smoke on the coals, she poked and moved the incense again, creating more smoke.

Amongst the male *faliye* that I visited, the skill of communicating with spirits was something they chose to acquire. For example, Sheikh Musa explained that as a child he used to watch a *faliye* in the community help people and he wanted to learn how to do the same, so he underwent a sort of apprenticeship to learn how to communicate with spirits and interpret their messages through the Quran. In contrast, for the female *faliye* I visited divination was not something they chose. Instead the spirits called on them to communicate with the divine. For some this was a burden and at times had dangerous consequences, but it was something they could not ignore because the spirits followed them. Many of them expressed that spirits were inherited through the matrilineal line, and their skills as diviners put them in a different position in judgements of morality as they did not choose the world of spirits, the world of spirits chose them.

Judgements of moral indeterminacy are three-fold: according to the Quran, to the spirits *faliye* interact with (and in turn the spirits an individual chooses to trust), and to the client. For many Somalis, divination is morally abhorrent through a formal textual interpretation

of the Quran, while for others divination is conceived of as a Prophetic gift and a science to be respected and trusted.

For some the moral (im)permissibility of divination depends on the “manipulation” of spirits a *faliye* communicates with. Some *faliye* work with “harmful” spirits, like jinn, and can use their divination skills “against someone” in a practice called *sixir*. There is strong belief and acceptance of jinn in both the Quran and in everyday experience¹⁹¹, but manipulating spirits to create harm is considered morally ‘wrong’ and is “very discouraged.” However, sometimes it is necessary for *faliye* to communicate with and manipulate harmful spirits in an effort to help someone. Thus, *faliye* who use their skills to help people are more acceptable to visit (personal communication with Idris Mohamoud Abdi, 20 June 2017¹⁹²).

For others it is the *faliye* themselves who are morally judged, not the clients who visit them. In some cases, whether or not the *faliye* charges or accepts money is a moral concern (for more on religious entrepreneurs in Mali see Soares 2005, and for more on the prayer economy see Last 1988). Khadra, for example, required 5,000 shillings (less than \$1) in 500 and 1,000 shilling notes to literally read messages from spirits on the currency itself. Basr often argued that they shouldn’t accept money for sharing a divine gift (while at the same time chastising me for not paying enough). She also explained that since the *faliye* are doing ‘wrong,’ not us, when we visit the *faliye* we must “take some and leave some” since they can’t be fully trusted [as moral individuals]. She expressed this differently when we deliberated whether or not Fowzia should read our destiny, “sometimes she is good and sometimes she makes things up, let’s see.”

When I enquired deeper as to what Basr meant by this sentiment, she explained that the Prophet advises to only ‘take’ some of what *faliye* tell us. According to Basr, *faliye* can eavesdrop on conversations about someone’s future, but since *faliye* are not to be morally

¹⁹¹ Many students suffer jinn attacks, and I witnessed one hospital patient suffer from jinn possession while undergoing treatment from a local bone-setter.

¹⁹² In our communication it was emphasized that this is similar for the *cilaaj* Islamic healing centres; “according to my *cilaaj* experiences sheikhs deal with what they call very bad jinn, they threaten it and punish it in an effort to remove the jinn from the patient. In the process of helping the person, they communicate with the bad spirit inside the person.” He continued by emphasizing that for many visiting the *cilaaj* is morally permissible, much like visiting the *faliye* (personal communication with Idris Mohamoud Abdi, 20 June 2017).

trusted one shouldn't take everything they say as truth. *Faliye* have access to the truth, but we can't trust them to report it accurately.

By 'taking some and leaving some' Basr is not only morally distancing herself from *faliye*, but she is also reinforcing her moral status as a knowledgeable and textually informed believer. She knows that *faliye* are morally ambiguous, and by 'taking' only part of what they say she is showing that she doesn't fully trust or believe them. For example, before our reading with Fowzia Basr explained that we had been to two *faliye* and they each said similar things. We were curious if what they told us was true and maybe she, Fowzia, could help. For Basr this was a test to see if our last readings were accurate, but also a test of Fowzia's divination skills. She had already proven her divination skills in some ways to Basr, but she wasn't perhaps as reliable as Sheikh Mohammad. This was her chance; if she gave a similar reading as Sheikh Mohammad, she could not only prove her skills to Basr, but also reconfirm a narrative of Basr's destiny she felt unsure about. This suggests Basr is not only negotiating her own morality, but she is also someone who has made careful calculations about her destiny. She is able to choose what to 'take' and what to 'leave;' meaning that the *faliye* is only as accurate as she decides. She is working on her destiny by choosing what she wants to come true, or what she has identified as a sign of confirmation.

For a few people, engaging with good spirits is a gateway to potentially entering the world of bad spirits. My friend Samatar was intrigued and nervous for me during my visits to *faliye*. He enjoyed listening to and helping me interpret what different *faliye* told me about my destiny, but he was also fearful for me to follow their advice. For example, one *faliye* suggested I slaughter a goat and offer some of the meat to the spirits. Doing this would release my spirits and they would help guide me towards my destiny¹⁹³. Samatar was adamant that I not slaughter a young goat with brown spots on its neck because I would then be forever indebted to the spirits. He explained that they would frequently "need more" and I could potentially go crazy from their demands. He described many stories of people who have gone crazy because of spirits¹⁹⁴.

¹⁹³ In this case we were speaking about my love life.

¹⁹⁴ In the end I heeded Samatar's advice; although I did request my local butcher search for a goat with brown spots on its neck when she went to the weekly livestock market.

Divination sessions can be extremely intimate and intensely emotional, particularly because many women visit *faliye* during times of heightened emotion. Sharing advice from *faliye* and communications with spirits depended on the level of trust between a woman's friends and her female family¹⁹⁵. I observed small negotiations of intense emotion during divination sessions between women through their body language and voice level. If someone was feeling particularly vulnerable they would whisper with the *faliye* and use their body as a barrier so I, or the others, couldn't hear the conversation. During our visit to Mama, Basr did just this. Basr purposefully whispered with Mama so I couldn't hear what they discussed. It was during a time when Basr's relationship with her husband was in crisis; the water from Khadra hadn't worked and the previous readings from Sheikh Mohamed, Ubax, and Fowzia were proving wrong.

Not every session is highly emotive or demands secrecy to protect personal vulnerabilities. Sometimes teenage children may sit nearby, or the television may be playing in the background, diffusing any tension. However, divination sessions are often only attended with women you trust, usually due to the moral judgement and gossip that visiting a *faliye* can create. I only visited *faliye* with women who I trusted to protect my social morality, and to guard the secrets revealed about my past and my destiny¹⁹⁶.

One friend, Awrala, trusted Basr and I to join her divination session with Sheikh Mohammed and kept us informed about the effect of an amulet he had made her. Awrala visited Sheikh Mohammed for guidance about her love life. She was in love with a man named Axmed, but he couldn't commit to marrying her. Axmed already had one wife and several children, and although he was a wealthy businessman he wasn't sure if he could provide equally for his first wife and Awrala. Awrala and Axmed met frequently at different friend's houses for privacy; they wanted to get to know each other and date without the potential gossip it could create. During these dates Awrala would act as hostess and serve Axmed tea, clean his *qaat* leaves from the carpet, and run to the shop if he wanted a Coka Cola. Axmed, in return, gave Awrala small amounts of money and gifts like perfume.

¹⁹⁵ Many consider divination to be part of the 'women's world', although this gendered generalisation needs further research.

¹⁹⁶ The emotional intensity is also why I don't reveal what the *faliye* said during my divination sessions. My relationships were scrutinised, influenced, and acted upon with the help of *faliye*. My participation in divination became a method of understanding the life of the other world, a means to gaining greater intimacy with female friends, and a form of practical action towards my destiny.

According to Awrala they would sometimes kiss, touch, and one time they took a shower together.

After months of courting Axmed left for Hajj and promised to give Awrala a definitive answer about marriage when he returned. He was away for nearly a month and when he returned he explained that Hajj was a transformative experience. He decided he no longer wanted to be with Awrala and ended their courtship.

Awrala was devastated and she became depressed, stopped eating, and suffered severe headaches. She eventually returned to her family home near Borama and decided to visit Sheikh Mohammed for help getting Axmed back. Sheikh Mohammed gave her an amulet to wear on her right arm, underneath her clothes, and advised her to touch Axmed with her right arm. The power of the amulet's prayer for love would be transmitted to Axmed and he would slowly begin to love her again and ask her to marry him.

After Awrala touched Axmed with her right, amulet wearing, arm their relationship followed a pattern of highs and lows. At points, especially right after the reconnection the amulet afforded, they seemed likely to marry; other times they cut off contact and vowed to never speak again. When I left Hargeisa at the end of 2015, their relationship was at an impasse; his first wife was getting involved and she was not happy about their long term "secret" romance.

Awrala's and Axmed's relationship is one example of when a woman may turn to divine intervention. It also illuminates the very real powers of divination and divine guidance, whether from spiritual intervention or a boost in Awrala's confidence in finding committed love. When the relationship was headed towards marriage Awrala praised the skill and power of Sheikh Mohammed, and when the relationship was headed towards break-up she, and others invested in the romance, blamed Awrala's intentions, suggesting they weren't 'pure' and that her greed stifled the amulet's effectiveness. In such moments Awrala was described as being materialistic, greedy, and her 'true' love for Axmed was doubted. The narrative surrounding Awrala's character, and Sheikh Mohammed's skill and power fluctuated according to the perceived success of the relationship. This at times volatile narrative of love and romance mirrors Basr's advice "to take some and leave some"; when the relationship was going well, we (Basr and I) 'took some' of Sheikh

Mohammed's words as powerful truths, when the relationship was souring, we 'left some' and blamed Awrala's character and failing virtue for the failure of Sheikh Mohammed's amulet. Their relationship also illuminates destiny's middle ground: (1) Awrala exercised her will to act on her destiny by choosing to seek divine guidance, (2) she exercised her will by wearing an amulet in the hopes it would provide a spiritual intervention in her troubled relationship, and (3) her ability to achieve what she believed to be her destiny (love and marriage with Axmed) was limited by God's will and misrecognition of His guidance due to her lack of virtue.

6.4 Dua istikhara

The second divine intervention many draw on is a supplicatory prayer called the *dua istikhara*. I do not consider the *dua istikhara* to be in contrast to divination; rather it is an alternative, or an additional means through which women can access divine guidance to achieve love, marriage and children as part of their destiny. Many women who visit *faliye* also use the *dua istikhara*, but many women who use the *dua istikhara* would consider divination to be morally abhorrent. Most of my understanding about the *dua istikhara* is through several female university students who helped arrange discussions with a wider group of university students from all over Hargeisa, specifically women from their Quranic School. None of the young women were married at the time, and all were pursuing university degrees in the social sciences.

The young women explained that the *dua istikhara* is a prayer that men and women can use when faced with making a life changing decision. Hibaaq used the prayer to ask God for guidance about whether she should stay in Hargeisa or move abroad with her father. However, most of the women I spoke with used the prayer for guidance on issues of love and marriage (see also Edgar and Henig 2010a).

In Islamic doctrine '*dua*' is understood as an appeal or invocation, usually a supplicatory prayer. This type of prayer is performed at the end of *salat*¹⁹⁷ and is accompanied by the gesture of outraised hands with the palms facing upwards (Esposito 2003b). Sometimes *dua* are performed collectively, like during *sitaat* and *Qoys Kaab*, or for rain during periods

¹⁹⁷ The formal prayers performed five times a day.

of drought (this form of collective prayer is called *allabari*¹⁹⁸). Sometimes they are performed individually, like the *dua istikhara*.

The *dua istikhara* is a way to ask God for guidance in making a difficult decision, or when one feels uncertain about how to act. A group of young women from a nearby Quranic school explained that reciting the *dua istikhara* can help if one draws on their belief in God. The prayer can help young women¹⁹⁹ in matters of love and marriage, and many women first explained the prayer through a hypothetical anecdote: if a woman is not sure between two men, she can ask God for a sign to guide her towards the right man.

The young women were unclear as to whether the prayer can only help with love or marriage. Some explained that if a woman is to marry a man it is presumed that she loves him, while others explained that there are two types of love, “the love of a husband and the love of a friend [boyfriend].” Some argued that the *dua istikhara* is only meant for the love of a potential husband, not a boyfriend. Others argued that the prayer could only be used for marriage, not for love²⁰⁰.

Once women perform the prayer they wait for a sign from God to guide them. There are two ‘types’ of guidance; daytime guidance (Aydar 2009; Gouda 1991) is given through bodily feelings and signs, whereas dream guidance (Edgar and Henig 2010a) relies on symbolism. Although daytime guidance seemed to occur most often for the young women I met²⁰¹ Edgar and Henig (2010b, 65-67) write that the hadith defines dream interpretation as a way to access the divine; specifically the Prophet describes “true” or “authentic” and

¹⁹⁸ *Allabari* are forms of collective prayers held at times of common need, such as during drought, or as part of women’s peace activism to pray for peace during the conflicts in Somaliland from 1991-1996. During an *allabari* people gather to share food and pray to overcome their difficulty. “*Allabari* can also be held to give thanks to God when something good has happened. Traditionally they were a way of sealing trust and forging friendships” (Hassan et al. 2004, 145).

¹⁹⁹ More research is needed into the gendered aspects of the *dua istikhara*.

²⁰⁰ These sentiments reveal young women’s emphasis on love as a marital value.

²⁰¹ My research collaborator Cabdixakiim Cabdilaahi Cumar suggests that dream interpretation is relevant and powerful in Somaliland, however this merits further investigation.

“honest” dreams He experienced in sections of the Quran²⁰² (Edgar and Henig 2010a, 254)²⁰³.

Many women I spoke with emphasised guidance through feeling; they understand that God sends His guidance through a specific feeling a young woman may have in reaction to a potential husband’s actions, where his action is interpreted as a sign of his character and the feeling a woman has in response to that is understood as God’s guidance. Hibaaq, and her friend Libin, explained that signs can be in a dream, but it is best if it is a feeling. Sometimes the feelings and the dreams work together to guide you towards the right choice for your destiny, and “sometimes you can get a feeling for someone who isn’t the ‘right one’ but you will be shown signs in their behaviour.” This suggests that the body becomes a tool through which to identify signs, and interpret the meaning of feelings and dreams.

Hibaaq described the feeling that should help guide your decision after making the *dua istikhara*, “you feel a rest in your heart for what is good and what is bad. Allah will guide you because He controls your feelings and your heart.” Libin continued, “People get mixed up, like being [feeling] safe and cool is the one to love.” She says that when the time comes for her to decide who to marry she will pray the *dua istikhara* and “look for safety and cool, like this is my place, a place where your heart feels at home and at rest. You feel *zekena*: rest, relax[ation], and comfortable.” Hibaaq and Libin’s description of feelings sent by God shows that when calling on divine guidance and intervention one finds comfort in the uncertainty of their destiny, God sends signs to show women the right path, but it is up to them to interpret them and to act.

Another young woman who was part of the conversation, Nala, added that “if you ask about a man [in the *dua istikhara*] He may give it to you or not, but you may only get it [the man in question] in the “other-life”.” Nala’s statement emphasizes the complete

²⁰² For more on dreams and signs in the Quran see Yusuf (12) Verse No:12, 36, 43-44, 100-101; Al-Anbiya (21) Verse No:5; As-Saaffat (37) Verse No:105; Az-Zumar (39) Verse No:42 (Abbas and Atwell, n.d.).

²⁰³ There are many similarities between the *istikhara* interpreters Edgar and Henig (2010a) write about and Somali *faliye*; including issues around exchange of money for a service which “puts a price on the Quran,” language which avoids Islamic orthodoxy, messages perceived from an alternate guide or spirit (not an angel or a divine image), dealings with misfortune, affliction, and sorcery remedy.

omnipotence of God, and at the same time shows that the good life, a utopian destiny²⁰⁴, may not be achieved in this life, but in the faraway future, or the “other-life”.

Hibaaq added that intention is important when using the *dua istikhara*, “God accepts your prayer if you believe that He will help you. *Istikhara* is only accepted if you believe He will accept it. If you know what makes you feel *zekena*, then you will know the right way.”

Hibaaq is emphasizing that in order to know which signs to follow, which choice to make, you also need to know yourself well enough to identify certain feelings. She also draws on intention; if good things happen it is because you have good intention, or act in a good way. This echoes Basr’s analysis on the effectiveness of Awrala’s amulet; lacking good intention also means lacking virtue. Intention and knowing oneself are key in establishing a dialectical relationship between the self and God, they are also virtues to be learned over time, and eventually projected outward and upward towards God. The emphasis on knowing oneself and intention when interpreting dreams, feelings, or signs of guidance towards your destiny suggests that individuals possess the capacity for power (see Abu Lughod 1990, 1992, 1999, 2013; Mahmood 2012 for more on women’s agency and power) through the choice of exerting their will (potential action) in shaping and potentially changing their destinies. Women, like Hibaaq and Awrala, draw on the unity created with God as part of an ethical project, which is vital in being able to identify signs, feelings, and symbols sent as guidance.

There are multiple creative means women draw on when life isn’t necessarily going the way they imagine. Sometimes seeking divine intervention is enough to make women aware of a hope or dream they never thought possible, like having children. Sometimes women draw on technologies of the imagination to help them achieve these hopes, where hope becomes a mode of action (Miyazaki 2004). Technologies of the imagination are the “diverse manners or styles through which imaginative effects are engendered” (Sneath et al. 2009, 16). The imagination is not a holistic backdrop of meaning, it doesn’t need to serve a social or cultural purpose, nor does it need to accommodate the romantic tendency toward something positive (ibid. 9). Rather, the imagination brings to mind that which is

²⁰⁴ Similarly, Jackson’s Sierra Leonean informants describe a utopia where love, marriage, and family are part of women’s future imaginary. Jackson writes that utopia “captures a universal yearning to be more than we presently are and to have more than we presently possess” (2011, 38). He continues, “when life fails to fulfil our needs objectively we have recourse to the subjective strategies of make-believe, imagination, and daydream” (2015, 72).

not present to the senses (ibid. 11). As one creates meaning in the previously unfamiliar or impossible, the only way to perceive of it is to imagine it as reality (ibid. 12).

Technologies of the imagination may be objects, like amulets; acts, like slaughter, drinking blessed water, or prayer; or narrative²⁰⁵. Narrative becomes a means through which women conceive of alternative possibilities. It is a means of capturing sparks of hope. Women do not necessarily imitate “what is the case,” rather narrative is a creative means to create and re-create what *ought* to be the case. This results in an entanglement or multiplicity of stories, where the telling of your troubles and asking for help and guidance constitutes a form of narrative that illuminates many moments simultaneously.

6.5 Destiny and the life course

“To act,” according to Arendt, “means to take an initiative, to begin ... to set something into motion” (1958, 177). When women seek divine intervention in times of crisis or uncertainty they act on their destiny by working on time; by acting on their destiny they take initiative and begin to set their hopes for love, marriage, and children into motion. However, when women set their destinies into motion, this sense of beginning is also, paradoxically, a “middle” (Mattingly 2013), and tied to a “sense of an ending²⁰⁶” (Aristotle 1996²⁰⁷); in other words action implies a simultaneous beginning, middle and end across a continuum of time. For example, when women seek divine intervention they set something into motion, indicating a beginning. This beginning is predicated on a history of previous ‘tests’ of *dunya*, or ‘failures’ and is thus backward facing in time. Women’s choice of divine intervention based on their history as a solution to crisis and uncertainty is an action in the present, indicating a ‘middle.’ Women look back in time at life’s ‘tests’ and accordingly act in the present through divine intervention, suggesting a sense of a ‘middle’ in this thread of temporal experience. When women visit *faliye* or recite the *dua istikhara* they wait for guidance, identified through signs, feelings, and symbols. The identification of signs, feelings, and symbols, suggests a sense of an ending because women are moving forward in time, towards either a solution to their crisis or towards the life of the other world where their destiny can be achieved.

²⁰⁵ Other technologies of the imagination include numbers and codes (Holbraad 2011), and objects (Humphry 2009).

²⁰⁶ According to Arendt (1958, 177) the Greek work *archein*, means “to begin,” “to lead,” and eventually “to rule,” indicating a beginning, and leading to an end (Aristotle 1996).

²⁰⁷ According to Aristotle’s Poetics, every “epic” has a sense of an ending.

The simultaneous sense of a beginning, a middle, and end within moments of crisis or uncertainty represents just one thread in the entanglement of selves, time, and moralities. For example, when Hibaaq faced uncertainty about whether to stay in Somaliland or go abroad, only one thread of her sense of self stopped in time. She still had to continue performing her role as a daughter and sister; she still had to continue finding balance between modesty and intimacy on dates with her boyfriend; she still had to perform *salat*, wear the hijab and enact her piety. All of those threads were still in play. Hibaaq had to navigate a shifting sense of self (Ewing 1990), negotiating the values that inform her sense of self and the ethical life she wants to live, and she needed to feel ‘progress,’ giving life its sense of forward movement. Thus, entanglement suggests there are multiple arcs of being, multiple transformations into which new conceptions of the self are crafted through “sparks of hope” (Benjamin 1973; cf. Miyazaki 2004). It is through sparks of hope, a sense of knowing there is more than the present holds, that action takes route. Hope is located in women’s utopian visions of what their destiny may hold, thus when women act, they are acting on their destiny.

There is no temporal distinction between the life of this world and the life of the other according to Islamic eschatology. In Islamic eschatology *dunya* refers to the things of life in this world, to the now. In contrast, *akhira*, meaning the hereafter, exists beyond the measure of time. However, they are related in their understandings of time and space: *dunya* is a physical space and a time on earth, *akhira* is “spatially distant” or an “other abode” (Lange 2015, 37-38). This lack of a “neat temporal distinction,” nor a “clear-cut” spatial divide between *dunya* and *akhira* (ibid. 42-43) suggests that destiny is infinite in time and life has no end as such. Thus, the hopeful imaginary of achieving one’s destiny is located both in the near future (the life of this world) and the faraway future (the life of the other world). Additionally, the sense of an ending when crisis and uncertainty are resolved does not signal an end of time because the entanglement of time, selves, and moralities extends into the life of the other world.

In what follows I argue that when women seek divine intervention as a means of acting on, through, and towards their destiny they are also moving forward and backward in time. When women encounter crisis or uncertainty time stops, and when women choose to exert

their will through divination or the *dua istikhara* they are acting on their destiny by 'working on' time.

6.6 Time-maps and stopping time

Time and temporality have been widely explored in philosophy and anthropology.

Durkheimian and Kantian notions of time explore categories of time and space through periodization and causation. Durkheim (2001) argues that time is experienced through collective representation, and collective action shapes human temporal awareness. For him time is thought of in periods which are socially derived; like days, months, years, even market-week. While for Kant (1998)²⁰⁸, Durkheim argues, the category of time is expressed through group commonality, or "social time." In Kant's the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1998), time is absolute, it is directional with a before and after; it is a chain of causally linked events. Thus for Kant, time is asymmetrical in that all events are semi-ordered with respect to other events, but events can be simultaneous with one another as well as before and after one another (Gell 1992, 11).

To understand Kant's asymmetrical layering of time, Gell (1992) introduces time-maps. He argues there are three forms of time: non-human, social, and personal experience. In order to navigate these forms of time humans develop representations, or time-maps. Time-maps are partially related to the passage of real time, yet they mediate and shape personal experiences of it. Building on Gell's time-maps, Laura Bear (2014, 2016) writes that time-maps are "short-term, pragmatic tools used by individuals" (2014, 16); collective representations of time need to be "thickened" with affect and temporal depth²⁰⁹. Thickening time to include images and narrative structures illuminates how time can be related to forms of agency, thus allowing for a framework to "labour," or work on time.

Such a framework shows how various time-maps are co-ordinated, both in relation to social and non-human rhythms (Bear 2014, 16). Different time-maps can produce conflicting social rhythms and experiences and some time-maps may dominate over others at various points. To capture the complexity of different time-maps, she argues for representations

²⁰⁸ For more on Kant's theory of time and space as related to conscious representation see the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

²⁰⁹ She cites Bakhtin's (1981) chronotypes of such a "thickening." According to Bakhtin (1981) images of time often take the form of chronotypes, or representations that materialize timespace making time visible. The dimension of time is thickened through a layering of the effects of images and narrative structures, such representations of time are related to forms of agency (Bear 2014, 7).

of “labour in and of time,” as creative, mediating, and navigating actions that reconcile multiple representations of time. For Bear the “act of working in and on time involves an encounter with the material world, limits of the body, multiple tools, and co-ordinations of diverse rhythms and representations” (ibid. 21). For Bear, modern time is “characterized by doubt about and conflict in representations of time” (ibid. 6). In what follows I analyse how crisis and uncertainty create a sense of time stopping, and how women “labour on” or work on time through divine intervention to create a sense of a beginning. Yet, this ‘stop’ in time becomes women’s experiences of a dominant time-map, while other time-maps are entangled in the social rhythms and experiences of the life course.

As women work on, through, and towards their destiny they negotiate several time-maps, including the near future and the far-away future within life course and destiny. When women encounter crisis and uncertainty time becomes suspended; they wait for guidance in how to act next. Such ruptures produce moments of suspension, and indicate an immediate present that must be considered and eventually acted upon. This suspension or rupture in time introduces the temporal frames of the near future and faraway future. Guyer (2007) describes the near future as “the reach of thought and imagination, of planning and hoping, of tracing out mutual influences, of engaging in struggles for specific goals” (409). The near future allows for emergent socialities aligned with a faraway future that favours hopes, ideas, and the imagination.

Suspension of time and the uncertainty, ambiguity, and contradiction it marks have been widely explored in anthropology (see Bear 2016; Gell 1992; Hage 2009a; Harms 2013; Jeffrey 2010; Mains 2007; Stewart 1996). Many take an economic approach to understanding modern time (Bear 2014; Guyer 2007; Miyazaki 2003), while others call for the discipline of anthropology to rethink its temporal constraints of religion, notably Christianity (Robbins 2001; 2004; 2007b). Some write on the lack of agency in waiting (Dwyer 2009) and others write about the normalcy of waiting as a heroic act of enduring (Hage 2009b). Still others consider labouring in/of time as a form of temporal agency (Bear 2014; Morosanu and Ringel 2016; Ringel 2016; Porter 2016). Gendered perspectives and experiences of suspensions in time can widely differ. For example Carey (2012) argues that uncertainty, in the suspension of time, can be a social tool. He shows that in the practice of seduction two people rely on their acting to produce unease around the other’s identity and actions, thereby generating a relationally productive uncertainty (ibid. 200). The two

people trying to seduce each other do not aim to lie, instead their goal is to “mystify, obfuscate and generalize uncertainty” (ibid. 191). The next phase of a relationship according to Carey is that of rupture, where the uncertainty produced is brought to a close and the affair resolved either through termination of the relationship or through social recognition like marriage. However, I argue that waiting, as part of the suspension of time, can facilitate anticipation and creative solutions to uncertainty and crisis. Thus, during the suspension of time, Somali women are not just waiting, they find creative solutions and build anticipation, they “labour in/of time” (Bear 2014) to reconcile different time-maps.

The different time-maps women negotiate when dealing with crisis and uncertainty sometimes creates conflicting social rhythms and experiences. Bear (2014) suggests focusing on the “labour in/of time” as creative, meditative, and navigatory actions that reconcile multiple representations of time. Seeking divine intervention through visits to *faliye* or praying the *dua istikhara* are two ways that women “labour in/of time.” In so doing they emphasize the immediate, the present, through action; the distant future through hope; and the past through narrative as a technology of the imagination.

Visiting *faliye* and/or praying the *dua istikhara* is a form of “labour in/of time,” or what Ringel (2016) calls “time tricking”²¹⁰. Time tricking involves work done on time, specifically on the contents of time, with other temporal moments in mind. Women trick time as a “practice that manipulates, coordinates, structures, or reorders knowledge about temporal processes” (ibid. 25). It is through this epistemic notion of time that I argue the life course seemingly follows a forward movement, however time is entangled in a simultaneity of presents, pasts, and futures. When tricking time the temporal focus is on the future; and, I suggest that when women visit *faliye* or pray the *dua istikhara* they are working on the contents of time with their hopes of the future in mind. In what follows, I present three methods of working on, or tricking time, to show how women negotiate an entanglement of time, selves, and morality over the life course.

²¹⁰ See Bear; Morosanu; Porter 2016 as part of the same volume for more on time tricking.

6.7 Time-tricking

The sense of a middle

When seeking divine intervention for crisis or uncertainty about love, marriage, and children, women seek to manipulate the present moment towards a future they believe is part of their destiny. Women seek immediate action through *faliye* or the *dua istikhara* as solutions to crisis and uncertainty. They visit *faliye* or perform the *dua istikhara* to manipulate the present by learning about their futures. After visiting the *faliye*, if the future is not one they desire, or if it is not what they expect, they not only possess powerful knowledge but they now possess the ability to act on it. They have the choice of accepting what *faliye* interpret as their destiny, or influencing their destiny through adoption of powerful materials like amulets, goats for slaughter, or blessed water. Women act on the present based on knowledge they learned about their futures. Similarly, when women narrate their dilemma, and their need for guidance during the *dua istikhara* they are working on the present by asking for signs, feelings, or symbols to guide them down the 'right' path; in other words they are manipulating the present towards a destiny they believe is truly theirs, one they have co-crafted with God through hope and imagination.

Being able to identify God's guidance and the 'correct' path, whether through signs, symbols and feelings sent after performing the *dua istikhara*, or visiting the *faliye*, women rely on knowledge of oneself. In "knowing oneself" women become closer to God, drawing on the virtues of trust and patience in their relationship with God, and when they pray the *dua istikhara* they trust that God will send them signs and potentially dream symbols to guide them towards the right path. One can only do this if they "know oneself," by identifying signs, symbols, and feelings. Libin, also in the group conversation, explained one must identify a feeling, or one must be able to identify behavioural changes in the men she is deciding between, or one must be reflective enough to remember dream symbols. Libin explained to me, when I asked what happens if she receives a feeling that guides her towards the 'wrong' man, someone she may eventually end up divorcing, that this wrong man is an important part of her destiny, her (failed) relationship with this man may lead her to the right man one day.

Awrala's misrecognition of God's guidance in her relationship with Axmed shows the potential consequences of not knowing oneself. She was not able to cultivate the virtues of trust and patience as she sought divine guidance; instead she focussed on Axmed's

material representations of love. She 'mistook' small gifts of money as signs of Axmed's love, fostering, what Basr perceived, as greed. Awrala was not able to distinguish between love and greed; she did not know herself well enough to know that God was sending her a sign about her relationship with Axmed, a sign meant to overrule the power of Sheikh Mohammed's amulet. Awrala's inability to read God's sign that Axmed was 'using' her attributes agency to her actions, suggesting that through a process of greater self-knowledge she would have been able to interpret God's sign. This also suggests that efficacy of the relationship being successful is granted to the power of Sheikh Mohammed's amulet and God's will. The amulet was meant to provide extra 'help' towards a path that Awrala thought to be her destiny, yet not knowing herself well enough to identify when she began to get carried away with feelings of lust and greed led her to not being able to recognise these feelings as signs within herself that a relationship with Axmed is not 'right.'

In manipulating the present moment towards a future in this life or the other-life women rely on divine knowledge and guidance. They trust and believe He has mapped a future for them, perhaps they had glimpses of this future through a *faliye* or perhaps they used their bodies as receptors of His divine signs and symbols. Divine intervention is a method of manipulating present time through action. Actions aid the path God has predetermined, but they also show a capacity for power, choice, and will, and in turn agency. Women exert power in seeking knowledge about their futures and themselves, they exert choice in the act of seeking intervention to overcome crisis and uncertainty, and they exert will by following through with potential solutions.

The sense of a beginning

The second time-map women work on, or trick, is the future through the past. Although practices of tricking time are future oriented, women can work on different temporal futures (Guyer 2007). Through hope as a method of action (Miyazaki 2004) women (re-) structure their futures based on unfulfilled hopes of the past, in this sense hope is inherited from the past (ibid. 139). Hope in the present is derived from "anticipation of fulfilment contained in that past hope," thus the forward momentum of life "entails an effort to replicate a past unfulfilled hope on another terrain" (ibid. 139). In other words, hope is a method of recapturing more/other hope (ibid.128); without past unfulfilled hopes one wouldn't be able to recapture the sense of a "not-yet" hope that the future holds. The unfulfilled hopes of women's pasts serve as catalysts for seeking divine intervention,

women maintain a sense of “not-yet” if love, marriage, and children are not actualized in this life.

When faced with crisis or uncertainty, one must act if one wants to overcome ruptures in time. If one fails to act, this thread of crisis that is part of the temporal entanglement of life fails to move forward, as is the case with Samatar. Samatar has yet to act on his desire to have children, and as a result part of his destiny remains suspended; he will be perpetually waiting for something to happen. Other parts of his temporal experience will continue. He may achieve other things he believes to be part of his destiny like the purchase of land, the building of a home, or moving to the countryside. However, in the entanglement of temporal threads he will forever remain waiting for children, and is living in indeterminacy²¹¹.

The sense of an ending

The final time-map women trick is the past through the future. Women re-order knowledge about the past to create and re-create futures they believe to be theirs. However, Ringel’s strong “present-est” position on time does not accommodate tricking the past, “tricking knowledge about time works for our informants by presupposing that the past has existed, but cannot be tricked” (2016, 29). Ringel’s analytical intention to devalue the past’s influence on the present and the future is highly problematic. Discounting the past is especially problematic when analysing post-colonial societies, like Somaliland, as many scholars have noted (Asad 1973; Mbembe 2001; Miyazaki 2004; Robbins 2001, 2004, 2007b; Said 1978). Past experiences and understandings are part of the post-colonial historical consciousness. Historical inheritance prepares individuals to experience in a particular way, and thus the historical consciousness orients individuals for the everyday in which they act. Action is not directed to the past nor is it a passive understanding, rather it is directed towards practical, everyday action oriented to the future (Mattingly 2010; 2014b). Thus, Ringel’s dismissal of tricking the past also dismisses the ways individuals understand and inherit past experience. I propose that Somali women trick the past through the use of narrative as a technology of the imagination.

²¹¹ The parallel between action and hope is reflected with a Prophetic incident in the following hadith: “O Messenger of Allah, should I tie my camel and trust in Allah, or should I untie her and trust in Allah?” The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Tie her and trust in Allah” (Sunan At-Tirmidhi 2517). In other words, without action there is no hope.

When women seek divine intervention, whether divination or the *dua istikhara*, they utilize narrative as a technology of the imagination to dream of utopic images and to mitigate dystopic outcomes. In imagining a utopic future my informants encounter what Bloch (2000) calls “abstract” and “concrete” utopias. Abstract utopias are day dreams of a future where the world remains the same except for the dreamer’s place within it²¹². The future is open, unconstrained, there is a range of possibilities. Concrete utopias are anticipatory and reach toward a real, possible future. It involves not only wishful thinking but also will-full thinking, “there is never anything soft about conscious known hope, but a will within it insists: it should be so, it must become so” (Bloch 1986, 1, 147). Concrete utopia entails both anticipating and affecting the future. Abstract utopia expresses desire, and concrete utopia carries hope (Levitas 1990, 15). It is precisely within Bloch’s concrete utopia that my informants seek divine intervention²¹³. They are not simply engaging in day-dreams and wishful thinking about the future, they deal in anticipation towards a real and possible future that can only be achieved through action. The actions women take are modelled on concrete utopias. Women may pray, slaughter a goat, use an amulet, or drink blessed water to actualize the utopia for which they hope.

6.8 Narrative as a technology of the imagination

In what follows I describe how narrative shapes perceptions about time and precipitates action towards one’s believed and utopic destiny. When women narrate to themselves (through prayer) or to others (to *faliye* during divination, and to God through prayer), they identify uncertainties, challenges, disappointments and failures in attaining the kinds of love, marriage and children they believe they ought to have. At the same time, in seeking divine intervention narrative conjures utopic images of a future filled with love, marriage, and children. As such, the narrative moment rests on anticipation, a “not-yet” future, or a future in suspense. In describing images of a utopic future, either with themselves or with *faliye*, women engage in will-full thinking that leads to action. Thus as narrative precipitates action, it also works on time by facilitating conceptualizations of continuity while foregrounding potential change. In other words, when women narrate past tragedy

²¹² Or, “wishful thinking, but the wish is not accompanied by a will to change anything” (Levitas 1990, 15).

²¹³ Jackson argues that the vision of a perfect life, or a better world, possibly in a better place “helps us explain and escape our present reality, it remains a state of mind” (2011, 168). He suggests his informants negotiate two utopias, the abstract and the concrete (Bloch 2000), while never losing sight of what is imagined and what is real. It is here that I propose narrative as a means to reconcile the abstract and concrete utopias my informants similarly encounter; narrative is a technology that precipitates creative action in acting on/in destiny.

and simultaneously conjure a utopic future they create “a narrative structure that can grasp together both continuity and the ever-present possibility of radical change” (Robbins 2009, 531).

Similar to Mattingly’s (2014b) “experimental narrative self,” narrative creates “moments in larger individual, family, and community trajectories – in journeys that unfold backward and forward” (Mattingly 2013, 319). As women wait for signs and guidance from God, attention is directed to the past as information becomes revealed (revealed by God or *faliye*) to them. The new information is integrated with what is already known; the past is being rethought. Thus their future integrates what is being learned as part of the forward movement of the life course. And, the present is “just a way station on a road that leads to a fuller sense” (ibid. 538). This “way station” is filled with anticipation as the past is remade and subsequent action leads to what they hope is their destiny.

When Somali women use narrative it is ‘experimental’ because they are experimenting with who they want to become. Women who seek divine intervention for love, marriage, and children hope to become wives and mothers; they seek radical change in their lives. As women actualize their destiny they transform understandings of what it means to be a wife and mother according to the situations they find themselves and to the situations they desire (for further discussion of this transformation see Chapter 8). Thus, as women experiment with narrative and temporal selves they seek to reconcile what Lester (2005) calls the “virtual self” and the “experimental self.”

Lester writes about “virtual” to “experimental” selves in relation to Mexican postulants in a convent who seek radical change from postulants to ordained nuns. Lester writes that when postulants enter the congregation it is important that they learn to establish strong ties with the community in which the convent is located (their cohort of fellow postulants) and with the mistress of postulants (the head mother). In their training to become nuns they undergo a process of self-exploration, a process closely monitored and mirrored back to the postulants. They receive critique, praise, guidance: they participate in group exercises, private consultations, lessons and sometimes they must perform penitence. The structuring of a different interior/exterior position in the convent helps the postulant to identify a split within herself, “between her false (temporal) self and her true (eternal) soul” (ibid. 250). The postulant begins to recognize a “virtual self” and an “experiential

self.” This process creates different “vectors of recognition, shaping the domains within which different selves may be seen and affirmed, as well as those iterations of self that are disavowed or excluded” (ibid. 251). For postulants the virtual self, the “as if” self, is not collapsed into the temporal, or bodied self. “She becomes increasingly adept at sensing how her temporal, bodied experience both reveals and affects the state of her nonbodied soul” (ibid. 251). In managing this process, she transforms herself to be “visible” to God. “She begins to become attuned to her bodily sensations in a new way and to interpret them as communications from God” (ibid. 251); her body becomes the portal of recognition.

Similarly, for my informants the act of tricking multiple time-maps allows them to conceive of parallel selves and parallel lives. Women can conceive of a life with a handsome, kind, and loving husband, they can also conceive of a life with four, five, six, ten, twelve children. They can conceive of a life where they live showered in wealth, or a life where they have a university degree and a career with an NGO.

As suggested earlier, the body is an important “vector of recognition,” in creating knowledge, in identifying signs and symbols, and enacting destiny through divine intervention. The body is the portal through which bodily sensations are felt, recognized, and identified. These can be signs from your past, signs you identify in the present, or signs to come. And, much like the postulants become visible to God, Hibaaq explained that knowing yourself helps you believe in God and “belief in God leads to belief in yourself;” illuminating a unity with God.

Additionally, for the postulants, a complete surrender of the self to God does not mean that the self is erased, “rather, it means that one learns to read the self through God” (ibid. 251). When women use their bodies as vectors of recognition, they rely on knowing themselves (inside and out) to get closer to God. They trust God will send signs to guide them to action. In turn, they are reading the self through God, and thus creating an ethical self predicated on the first and third person.

As the postulants enter a new understanding of the self with God they reframe the past by recounting vocation narratives. “Here the virtual self and the experiential self become integrated as a postulant learns to understand her life as the progressive unfolding of a

mutual recognition between herself and God” (252). Similarly, for my informants the act of reframing the past through narrative is vital to integrating the virtual self they hope to become with the experiential self of the present. In this way narrative helps Somali women do more, be more, and have more. They are improving their lot in life through a discursive technique. Reframing and recounting of the self wills women into action, while there is still a need for God. Women reframe and recount the past looking for signs of the destiny a *faliye* spoke of, or to validate signs received after performing the *dua istikhara*. Narrative’s role is only valid as a means of uniting the virtual and experiential self based on what one believes the future to be.

In this sense narrative helps show transformation, and the experimental remaking of social spaces. Women rely on narrative when talking with *faliye* or friends about love, marriage, and children, when recounting and considering failed hopes, and when describing or dreaming of a “not-yet” future. In such conversations women engage in the practice of “narrative re-envisioning” (Mattingly 2014b, 20). According to Mattingly narrative re-envisioning is the activity of seeing oneself in a new way by reforming one’s sense of possibility and reframing one’s commitments (ibid. 20). In narrative re-envisioning Mattingly emphasizes the task of becoming an ethical person, thus the technology of narrative is not only integral to working on time, it is also integral to living an ethical life.

6.9 Discussion

Somali women seek divine intervention to help them achieve their destiny²¹⁴. All of my friends and informants described a future that included love, marriage, and children. Whether or not these are achieved in the life of this world or the other world is unknown, but many women hope divine intervention will help actualize such utopic images.

These interventions highlight the intimate relationships women form with the divine, whether through mystic forms of Islam like divination, or through more ‘accepted’ forms like *the dua istikhara*. It is through this form of divine intimacy that I expand on the five movements of the life course, and focus on the entanglement of time. I argue that re-thinking temporal notions of the life course to extend beyond death and the life of this world enables insight into the phenomenological experiences of time to come to the fore.

²¹⁴ Similarly, Boddy (1989), Masquelier (2001), and Soares (2005) suggest that people who solicit practitioners of the “esoteric sciences,” or those that interact with spirits, do so for “good health, wealth, to avert misfortune, or simply to make sense of the world” (Soares 2005, 202).

At the same time, the potential for conflict during crisis or uncertainty illuminates women's conscious deliberation, contestation, and negotiation of values in resolving life's problems. I show that when women seek divine intervention they draw on technologies of the imagination to envision and enact a hopeful future. By negotiating actualized and experiential-selves, women rely on knowledge production to identify divinely ordained signs and symbols to guide them in their love relationships, in achieving their destinies, and in their journeys of moral becoming.

It is through the relationship to the divine that women illuminate the entanglement of subjectivity and time. Women make ethical selves through an "interlocking of presents, pasts, and futures that retain their depths of other presents, pasts, and futures, each age bearing, altering, and maintaining the previous one" (Mbembe 16, 2001). This sense of time is made up of ruptures and disturbances, a cacophony of unforeseen crises and moments of uncertainty. It does not necessarily result in chaos (although this is possible), and it does not necessarily lead to erratic behaviours (this is also possible); instead women work on time and towards their destiny through conscious reflection and active deliberation of how best to act. Ruptures in time are not simply moments in a larger pattern of ebbs and flows, rather they are moments of convergence between the past and the future. It can be understood as "emerging time" (Mbembe 16, 2001), and in turn women can be understood as part of a process of intersubjective emerging; where the first and third person (woman and God) enter into a dialectical relationship of ethical self-cultivation.

Chapter 7: Intimacy in marriage: knowledge, piety, and value ethics

Excerpt from field notes:

November 2015, Qoys Kaab Lecture

Sheikh Mohamed Gadhle lectured the *Qoys Kaab* students on “Islamic *meher*.” Before the class Nada came to me and told me I needed to wrap my hijab tighter around my face, “the Sheikh doesn’t like to see your neck.” She pulled my hijab so that it pinched the skin under my chin, and she fixed my sweater and *shalmad* so I was appropriately dressed but sweating. I was frustrated with Nada for adjusting my scarf, she seemed to equate my moral sensibility and public respectability with how tight my hijab was.

I settled at a desk in the front of the lecture hall, with Mariam sitting next to me. Our desks were pushed close together so she could help me with translation, I anticipated the lecture would be in Arabic, and we had to be on our best and most modest behaviour with the Sheikh; meaning we had to keep our whispers to a minimum.

The Sheikh was a large man with a strong presence. His white *khamis* was freshly ironed and matched with a white *taqiyah*. His *khamis* was pulled taught around his belly, he had a double chin that drooped below his groomed beard and he rested his pudgy hands on the table in front of him.

The women instantly hushed in his presence. The women who usually pulled back the *niquaab* during lectures with Nada, or the other female teachers left them down. The women who usually left the *niquaab* down even when the room was only filled with women rested their heads on the table so as to avoid eye contact with the Sheikh. I had never heard the room so quiet and I hardly saw the women in such awe of a lecturer.

“When the Prophet Mohamed came to the world He brought the rights of women, while before [Islam] they didn’t have full rights,” (translated from Arabic to English by Mariam) the Sheikh bellowed. He occasionally lifted his eyes to the room, but it was clear he was trying to avoid eye contact. “If something [referring to *meher*] has a lot of names that means it is something important,” and *meher* is important because without it “there is no

marriage.” The Sheikh emphasized the importance of *meher* through Quranic narrations, he emphasized that if a man is serious about marriage he will bring the *meher* to a woman.

He continued, “a small dowry [*meher*] is always best, but dowries don’t have a limit, it depends on her [the woman’s] choice. In Saudi Arabia the dowry is very expensive and that causes the marriage rate to decrease. In Somaliland the dowry isn’t expensive, but there are other costs like weddings.”²¹⁵

The Sheikh seemed to be subtly warning the women, don’t demand too much or you risk not getting married, and even if your dowry is low keep in mind additional costs that may be unattainable or a burden for a future husband.

He informed the women that the “*meher* is divided into two- you can either give the *meher* at the time of marriage or you can give the *meher* at a later time. In Somali culture the *meher* is given to women later.”

“*Why?*” I wrote in a note to Mariam.

“Because she is afraid to get divorced,” she wrote back.

“*Is that right Islamically?*”

“No, it’s not the woman’s choice if she gets the dowry now or later”

“*Why? Isn’t it her right to get the dowry first if she wants it?*”

²¹⁵ For women living in pastoral communities the *meher* was/is often paid in livestock. Previously women were not allowed to own property, including livestock, and were thus not given their *meher* upon divorce. Now women’s role in the pastoralist economy allows them to own livestock in their own right, and more men pay the *meher*, at least partially, to their wives when they demand it. A husband cannot take any of the *meher* livestock from his wife unless she agrees to give it to him. This change in the pastoral economy towards a market oriented way of life occurred around WWII when pastoralists lost influence over the non-productive sectors of society and a middle class of traders in the late-colonial and postcolonial periods developed, and became involved and dependent on the capitalist world economy (Kaptein 1995, 252; Warsame 2002, 36).

“[By not asking for the dowry first] She is avoiding for her husband to marry another woman [to take a second, third or fourth wife]. In Somali culture if her dowry is expensive it’s hard for the man to give her the divorce letter easily²¹⁷.”

The Sheikh continued speaking in single declarations:

“No one can take her dowry without her permission.”

“Women have the right to decide the limit of her *meher*.”

“If a woman gets her *meher* through shyness²¹⁸, fear, or cheating, her *meher* isn’t *halal*.”

“If the man and woman have intercourse [with others after marriage], the man must buy her dowry totally²²⁰.”

“If the woman gets divorced before having intercourse, the man must give her half of her *meher*.”

“You can’t take a man as your dowry.”

“If you die your dowry is given to your children or your family.”

He didn’t elaborate on these rules, he didn’t offer any explanations, he simply listed them slowly, thoughtfully, and methodically. He answered a few questions from the women whilst avoiding my raised hand. As he left the students clapped, they seemed impressed with the amount of knowledge he possessed and shared.

²¹⁷ According to Warsame (2002), women are entitled to their *meher* after divorce, however she reports that many urban women do not receive any *meher* at all. When women initiate divorce, they are often not entitled to *meher*. And even in cases where women do not initiate the divorce, men make it difficult for their wives so they can avoid paying anything. Often, Warsame notes, the women become “fed up” and relinquish their *meher* “to get their freedom” (55-56). She notes that this has become a common problem and women are left without financial security after divorce. Warsame’s findings in 2002 echo similar sentiments and experiences by women during the time of this research.

²¹⁸ Meaning subtle manipulation by being coy.

²²⁰ In other words, her husband must give her the dowry.

7.1 Introduction

The above vignette introduces a typical *Qoys Kaab* lesson. Patient and attentive students listen, take notes, ask questions, and discuss the content presented that day. The young, urban, unmarried, middle to upper class women are also enrolled in university, or finishing secondary school, and some are continuing their formal Quranic studies at one of the many madrassas. They, like nearly everyone I met in Somaliland, strive for ‘correct’ Islamic knowledge (Deeb 2006), as well as guidance in applying this knowledge in their everyday lives. Many young, urban women find this guidance through *Qoys Kaab* lessons, where women are taught *the* ‘correct’ interpretation of the Quran, as well as ‘correct’ application of pious skills and abilities throughout the life course. The classes specifically focus on teaching young women the skills and abilities needed for marriage and family life.

The classes are a formal means of cultivating the values of knowledge and piety. Knowledge is a collection of skills and abilities acquired through experience, and it is applied through one’s intelligence. Young women explicitly learn how to apply these values to their marriage preparation, as well as to navigating the challenges that marriage and family may present. Women can, thus, cultivate pious knowledge, but I separate the two because women strive to cultivate many types of knowledge and intelligence; including self-knowledge, street-smarts, confidence, and knowledge learned through university. Thus, for young, urban women *Qoys Kaab* classes are an important means of explicit moral development.

As women prepare for the life transition to wives and mothers, they sometimes encounter conflict between the ideals they hope for and the realities they face; realities like polygamy or domestic violence, as well as disappointment and frustration. This transition illuminates a conflict in values as young women seek and rely on both knowledge and piety to determine the “right” path. I draw on several ethnographic examples from *Qoys Kaab* classes, as well as from women who did not attend the classes, to show that young women currently seek new ways to live a moral lives regardless of class, clan, or education level. *Qoys Kaab* classes reflect a new morality, led by an urban, upper-middle class imaginary of what it means to be modern. Thus, when value hierarchies of the secular and the pious come into conflict, women draw on the knowledge and skills learned, discussed, and debated to deal with the challenges they may encounter.

The desire for new enactments of values is not limited to *Qoys Kaab* students, rather this desire is expressed and deliberated amongst many young, urban people. *Qoys Kaab* is a 'justifiable' and 'legitimate' means to gaining formal knowledge and skills related to the 'correct' enactment of knowledge and piety. According to many women, the explicit transmission of these values in a formal setting fills a gap in the transfer of generational knowledge. Nada, the founder of *Qoys Kaab*, along with several other women, explained that "young women do not learn from their mothers and grandmothers about their bodies, the wedding night, how to care for their husband, and how to raise a family." Thus *Qoys Kaab* was conceived as a recent and urban means of explicitly²²¹ teaching women how to 'act well' in marriage and family life. In addition to the explicit teachings of *Qoys Kaab*, women still learn right from wrong implicitly. They learn skills that are part of their ethical self-cultivation and abilities that signal transition through the life course phases by watching, listening, and making mistakes (Lewis 2008). Young girls and women indirectly and implicitly learn appropriate ethical dispositions when, for example, their mothers correct them for not securing their *hijab* tight enough, their grandmothers scold them for not serving their brothers' tea first, or they are beaten for complaining that they must eat their father's left-over food as their main meal. Thus, women implicitly learn morality from everyday experience, and some learn explicitly through *Qoys Kaab*; through these means young women begin to embody the values needed to live an ethical life.

I suggest that *Qoys Kaab* classes are not actually filling a gap in transfer of generational knowledge; instead the classes are filling a gap in the 'new' morality young women want. Young women seek a new morality based on their ideals of what it means to be modern; and for those young women I met, that means they want to forge a new morality where 'secular' knowledge and piety are not incommensurable²²² and are enacted in ways

²²¹ One friend, Magol, explained that before *Qoys Kaab* was established young urban women learned about the wedding night in locally organised cooking classes where, according to Magol, the teacher spoke of the wedding night through metaphor, rather than through explicit description. The learning of life phases through informal and indirect means, like cooking classes, reflects my own experience in cooking class. I was one of fifteen students, the others were unmarried women in their late teens, who indirectly learned how to care for husbands while learning to cook his 'favourite foods.' For example, instead of telling us to add salt to the recipe the teacher would say "add salt to your husband's taste" and thus we understood that part of pleasing our husband and having a good relationship was cooking food that he liked, seasoning to his tastes, and keeping a clean kitchen.

²²² See Chapter 5 for more on a historical contextualisation of this long standing 'incommensurability.'

commensurable with their ideas of what love, romance, modesty, materialism, and spirituality.

Below I describe life course transformation along with key moments of transition for my friends and informants. After revisiting *Qoys Kaab* classes and how they teach 'correct' understanding of and practical enactment of knowledge and piety I situate these values ethnographically and in the literature, demonstrating young women's quest for a 'new' morality. I then show how women are forging this new morality. Finally, I will link value ethics as enacted in this particular life phase to build on the overall thesis argument that academic articulations of the moral life course ought to allow for new understandings of agency and temporality.

It must be noted that the women who predominantly inform this chapter represent a specific section of society. *Qoys Kaab* women are university educated, or university bound and have employment opportunities not available to less-educated women. This situates them in a middle to upper class position in urban Hargeisa. Yet the values the *Qoys Kaab* women strive for are reflected throughout urban Hargeisa, even amongst women who have no formal schooling. Lower class, uneducated women in Hargeisa often become aware of *Qoys Kaab*, either by word of mouth, social media, or a BBC Somali radio story. Thus, although urban, university educated women predominantly inform this chapter, it is not to suggest that the values they strive for and negotiate are unique to them.

7.2 Life course transition and transformation

This chapter is the culminating 'phase' of this thesis' analysis of intimacy over the life course. For many women the life phase²²³ after marriage and first sexual intercourse is having children and motherhood, followed by menopause and the death of the husband. The experiences of a friend named Idil summarise the changes many women go through and the difficulties they face when they enter into marriage. Idil is the eldest of eight children, and lived in a cramped house that includes her aunts, uncles, and grandparents. Her family didn't have the money to send her to school so she grew up learning the home-keeping skills and caring for her younger siblings. She met Ibraahin in her neighbourhood; his family lives a 20 minute walk away. They decided to marry when they were in their late teens, what she herself described as 'young.' They didn't have the money for a wedding so

²²³ See Chapter 1 for more on an 'ideal' 13-phase model of Somali women's life course.

Ibraahin's father lent them money for an Imam to perform the *nikah* ceremony, and they had to forego an *aroos*. Idil moved into Ibraahin's family house, which included his siblings, their wives and children, his mother and father, and his aunts, uncles, and grandparents. Despite the constant flow of people in and out of the house, Idil and Ibraahin were given their own room.

Shortly after their marriage Ibraahin started university and Idil stayed home taking on the primary cooking and cleaning responsibilities for the household. Ibraahin's sisters also went to school and Idil was often at home with Ibraahin's brother's wife, Ladan, and Ladan's two (soon to be three) children. Ibraahin's mother, aunties, and grandmother often worked on the family farm just outside Hargeisa, while his father and brother drove public buses from morning to night. As the newest daughter-in-law Idil was charged with getting food and household goods from the market, cooking meals for the family, and cleaning the house. Sometimes she looked after Ladan's children if Ladan needed to rest or run an errand.

Shortly after getting married Idil became pregnant but had a miscarriage in the first trimester. She got pregnant again soon after the miscarriage, and again lost the foetus. Several months later she got pregnant and carried the baby to full term. During the pregnancy she maintained all of her household chores, cooking, and helping Ladan with her children. Sadly, Idil experienced an obstructed and prolonged labour leading to an emergency caesarean, which resulted in a still birth. It was shortly after the still birth that I met Idil. I visited her house several times a week during many people's mid-afternoon rest from 12-4pm. The family had eaten lunch, the house was clean, Idil didn't need to begin preparing dinner, and many shops were closed. The house was always quiet and Idil and I could chat in privacy, watch TV, practice drawing henna on each other's hands, and drink tea.

Idil would tell me about her daily stress and frustrations. She had had another miscarriage in the months following the still birth, she was not happy in her marriage with Ibraahin, and she was finding the housework to be overwhelming on her own. She desperately wanted a child. Ibraahin was beginning to suffer regularly with what she described as severe headaches, depression, insomnia, and he was hearing voices. Furthermore, Ibraahin's sisters weren't treating her well, they were becoming demanding with her. By focusing on

the frustration Idil felt during her daily routines it becomes possible to understand social relational patterns within families. These routines bring to the fore the ways in which duties, responsibilities, and opportunities are distributed among women according to the needs of the family.

Eventually Idil got pregnant again, and we went to several pharmacies and doctors' appointments to make sure she would have a successful delivery. She suffered severe nausea, and had medicines for multiple ailments I was not familiar with. She complained to me that Ibraahin's mother wasn't letting her eat enough food and she felt exhausted, and Ibraahin was doing nothing to intervene on her behalf. In her last trimester she eventually chose to leave Ibraahin and move back in with her family. Her choice to leave not only shows her dissatisfaction with the marital reality which failed to live up to her expectations, but it also shows her conscious deliberation and subsequent action in changing her destiny. Idil's well-being had diminished due to what she felt to be a lack of respect by her in-laws. Idil's actions indicate her remarkable ability to accept her lot in life, but to also work towards the type of family she desires.

After much arguing with her father to let her stay (he sent her back to Ibraahin twice, and complained he didn't have the money to support her), she was given a mattress to sleep on in her old home. Her father refused to support her financially because Idil's mother was also expecting another child at the same time. Ibraahin wasn't giving Idil any financial support because he had been sent to the *cilaaj*, Islamic healing centre, for his health problems.

At her family home Idil had a different status than in Ibraahin's family home: she was the eldest daughter and therefore her younger female siblings were tasked with much of the daily chores. Idil was able to rest, look for work for after the birth, and attend medical appointments. With the help of my masters students, a group of public health doctors, we managed to arrange a free caesarean for her at the only public hospital. Idil was able to successfully deliver her baby, a girl named Nadifa, and she had family support after the birth to aid in her recovery.

When Idil returned to her family home with Nadifa she enjoyed the higher status her position in the family afforded. Her sisters helped her, I found her a well-paying job

cleaning the home of a foreign friend where she could also bring Nadifa, and she was now a mother. Through this new-found sense of well-being and status, her relationship with Ibraahin slowly began to repair itself; he quit university at the urging of the Islamic healer, and began driving a taxi to support his new life path of becoming a Quranic teacher. Although by the time I left Hargeisa, and in my subsequent visits since, Idil and Ibraahin had not moved back in together, they were working towards a balance in living arrangements that worked for them. Idil's desire to live within her natal family unit suggests the economic, social, and personal security benefits young women find in the sharing of household responsibilities. Her actions show there is room for manoeuvring, for achievement, and for working towards personal goals.

Idil's story shows how the period right after marriage can be extremely difficult for young women. This contrasts with young adulthood in Western society, which is widely considered the "prime" or best time of one's life (Shweder 2003b). Although Idil's situation was complex, her status increased when she successfully delivered a healthy baby. As Idil has more children, Ibraahin's brothers marry and more women join his family house, or if Idil and Ibraahin get a house of their own and their children marry and the new wives join the family house Idil's status will continue to change, to the point that old age may be a time of privilege and happiness²²⁴ (although the reality may not live up to the expectation).

Idil's story also shows that first impressions can be misleading; in other words, romantic ideals in the social and marital imaginary can be very different to the realities women face. Although the development and gendered discourse of Somali women tends to focus on narratives of women as either passive victims or agents of resistance, Idil's story shows that marriage and women's lived experiences are two sides of the same coin; women can experience both moments of difficulty and pain, as well as moments of resistance and personal triumph. They balance and negotiate the marital ideals with the realities they face. As women choose which course of action to take, they change the direction of their destiny towards what they believe it should be. Idil not only desires a marriage with a young man she fell in love with when she was young, but she equally desires a child and a husband who will support her and that child emotionally, financially, and through the family dynamics in which they live. Thus, Idil's story illuminates the list of virtues and

²²⁴ See Shweder 2003b for a parallel analysis of women's status and life course phases amongst Oriya Hindu women in India.

values in the moral order upheld by Somali women; including not only love and romance, but also chastity, modesty, duty, self-discipline, self-improvement, and the ideal of domestic service.

These virtues and values are balanced and negotiated by women during key experiences in the life course, and come to the fore during times of conflict, like during Idil's experiences early in her marriage. However, value conflict can be contextualised not only over the long term, but also regarding key choices in a woman's life. For example, a woman's first sexual intercourse²²⁵ is usually accompanied by extreme fear and anxiety. Young women are terrified of having intercourse for the first time because of the potential pain²²⁶. Many young women deliberate timing and often delay the *aroos* due to anxiety about the wedding night. One friend delayed her *aroos* four times in six months. Women are presented with several options for the wedding night: let the husband rip the small hole in the circumcision scar, have a traditional birth attendant cut the circumcision scar before the wedding night, go to a doctor who can surgically open the hole and provide a certificate of virginity. I had many conversations with friends in which they anxiously deliberated over the best option. They actively considered the values and virtues of love and romance alongside chastity, modesty, duty, self-discipline, and self-improvement. For example, Magol expressed severe anxiety about the wedding night but also spoke of trying to cultivate self-confidence. She knew she had a duty to have intercourse on the wedding night, she knew she needed to prove her chastity by bleeding and performing fear and modesty in front of her husband for the first time, but she also wanted to enjoy herself and to create a loving and romantic evening with her husband. She spoke of lighting candles, wearing a "short dress" and perfume, but the morning after the wedding she called me to say she was too afraid to let him penetrate her; she screamed and ran away. A week later we met for coffee and she said only on the second night they had successful intercourse. A month after that Magol said she was pregnant. She explained that if a woman does not get pregnant shortly after, "two months" to be exact, the wedding night other women (primarily peers and familial elders) will gossip about her and suspect fertility issues.

²²⁵ This can legally be after the *nikah* although many women wait until the night of the *aroos*; additionally some women engage in forms of premarital "sex" including oral and anal sex.

²²⁶ Women are fearful of pain during the breaking of their hymen, as well as the pain of their husband's ripping the small hole in the vulva during intercourse so he can enter her vagina with his penis.

Magol's situation is very different from Idil's; her family is middle class and sent all of their children to school and university. Magol completed university and married a Somali man working in Qatar. He was able to pay for an *aroos*, as well as the rental of a house for two months after the *aroos* as a "honey moon" (*bisha malabka*). This afforded them privacy in establishing their relationship as a married couple. In contrast Idil's marriage didn't include a public celebration and she was immediately folded into Ibraahin's existing family life. She had a more challenging transition into marriage and into establishing her identity as a married woman.

Contrasting Magol's early 'success' in conceiving and later having a healthy child, with Idil's difficulties reflects the notion that a woman's well-being hinges on the particular kinds of family relationships she has succeeded at developing or has failed to develop as she ages. Magol's experiences in early marriage differ greatly from Idil's trials and tribulations; and this is partly due to Magol's early reproductive 'success'²²⁷ thus facilitating a family relationship in which she now has the status and title of motherhood. Another difference between Magol and Idil's successes are the economic and class affordances of each woman.

Additionally Magol's experiences illuminate the choices women are presented with when trying to find balance between virtues and values where simultaneously there are cultural expectations that limit the extent of the choices women can make; for example in Magol's experiences of her FGC and the wedding night. However, new options like being cut open by a doctor and presented with a certificate of virginity shows that those limitations are not necessarily static, and can change to reflect changing values, or the changing enactment of those values.

Magol's quick conception differed from what she expressed to me prior to her marriage. She had wanted to delay motherhood by at least a year and enjoy being a married woman. However, when she told me she was pregnant she said she was very happy and ready to transition to the next phase of motherhood. Motherhood is a phase of the life cycle that all women desire and expect to experience. It is something that women actively work

²²⁷ 'Success' in reproduction is, now, much less contingent on having sons. Many informants described the benefits of having daughters, including reliability; notably through a common anecdote that families have come to rely on their daughters abroad more than their sons due to their success in finding stable work, and their reliability in sending money home to Somaliland.

towards, and plan. When asked, many women expressed the desire to have as many children as “Allah will give”. This does not mean that women are unaware of the benefits of birth spacing and the economic resources needed to raise children. In fact I met women who secretly used contraception for birth spacing (I did not meet any women who expressed comfort discussing contraception with their husband), and women who expressed that they didn’t want any more children because they found it difficult to care for the ones they already had²²⁸. I observed women’s subtle manipulations of having as many children as “Allah will give.”

After achieving motherhood Dr. Shukri from *Qoys Kaab* listed menopause as the next phase²²⁹. Although menopause was rarely, if ever, mentioned during conversation (only one friend expressed concern she might be approaching menopause), it was taught in *Qoys Kaab* as an important physical transformation in the life course. Dr. Shukri, erroneously, explained that after menopause women would have less pain because intercourse and child birth will open the circumcision and allow urine and old menstrual clots to pass. These physical changes can be framed as a transition away from motherhood that alters women’s relationships with their husband. After menopause women will reach a point in the life course where motherhood is no longer possible, and they will no longer endure menstrual pains nor pains from intercourse and childbirth. Intercourse may no longer be sought because there is no possibility of childbearing, and this may prompt some men to seek a new wife. It is also a time where familial power relations transition, when women no longer need to fulfil the duties of bearing and raising children, and are instead act as a potential mother-in-law who manages her daughter in law.

It is also possible menopause was not, at this phase, necessarily important in young women’s imaginary because of the immediacy of where they are in the life course and an inability to imagine that the next phase will really ever come and transform things. For example, Fowsia in Chapter 4 is nearing the end of the life of this world and strives to act well so that her ‘scale’ of deeds on Judgement Day permits her entrance into Paradise. She has struggled in finding a satisfying relationship, but her immediate needs are ultimately

²²⁸ For more on family planning and Islam see (Musallam 1983).

²²⁹ Dr. Shukri taught a *Qoys Kaab* lesson on women’s health and listed menopause as the last phase of a women’s bodily changes. She listed the key physical and bodily changes in a woman’s life as the following: circumcision, first menarche, first sexual intercourse, child birth, and finally menopause. The *Qoys Kaab* students were particularly interested in discussing ‘normal’ menstruation flow and pain as many of them experienced debilitating menstrual pain related to their FGC.

met through the friendships and sisterhoods she has created. By striving to do the best good she hopes to balance the ‘bad’ of indulging in pleasures like *qaat* or cigarettes through her spiritual devotion, both as an active *sitaat* ‘sister’ and through her daily rituals of *salat* or fasting during Ramadan. Thus, at this point in Fowsia’s life course menopause is experienced as a bodily and hormonal change, yet understood as more of a transition towards imagining the life of the other world, and the potential for love, marriage, and children that her ‘good’ actions can bring. The faraway future is now her near future, a reality within her grasp.

The next phase of the life course women referenced was the death of their husbands, particularly the forty day mourning period, or *hinga*²³⁰. Women didn’t speak directly of their own death or the life of the other world. Women described the ways in which they memorialised and remembered husbands. One older woman described a ‘*siyaaro*²³¹’ she held for her husband every year on the anniversary of his death. She explained that she knew it was ‘wrong²³²’ to slaughter in his honour every year, but she tearfully told me that it makes her feel better so she was going to keep doing it. Many women memorialise their husbands in this manner, and draw on their family, sisterhood, and the divine for support and guidance.

A husband’s death was the last phase for many women when asked to describe key life moments and transitions, their own death and destiny were not mentioned; instead destiny and death were discussed or referenced in other, every day, situations²³³.

However, as this thesis argues, the life course does not simply end upon death, instead the life of the other world is infinite. Thus the complex entanglement of times and selves that women’s lives follow suggest that life moves in five directions instead of a single, simple narrative arc. Life not only moves forward and backward *through* time, it persists through

²³⁰ Also called *assay*.

²³¹ See Chapter 5 for more on Somali *siyaaro*. *Siyaaro* are typically annual pilgrimages to Sufi saints’ tombs, and involving a ritual slaughter and offering of meat. This woman, and many others, perform the same ritual by making an annual pilgrimage to their husband’s grave (typically on the anniversary of his death) and slaughtering an animal.

²³² Many people consider it *haram* to slaughter an animal on an annual, or ritual, basis if performed for any other reason than *Eid al-Adha* (lit. Feast of the Sacrifice). This also indicates a change in accepted and ‘correct’ moral action.

²³³ For example, after hearing about or witnessing someone’s ill health, death, or a horrific accident (like an all too frequent road accident). Death is not taboo, is it an everyday reality, and not something to be avoided or feared. During these situations prayer reveals people’s understandings of death and destiny.

stops and starts *in time*²³⁴; it also moves outward, inward, and upward²³⁵, with the fourth dimension being time²³⁶. Analysis of women's life phases illuminates the realities of marriage and the skills and abilities women cultivate in order to shine outward and discipline their shine inward. Women's lives move outward because with time a woman learns the skills and abilities needed to shine. She moves inward because she learns through practice, failure, and potential misinterpretation to temper and "dull" her shine. She moves upward because through the process of cultivating self-knowledge a woman also comes to know God; it becomes possible for her to understand the world of divine and spiritual. Thus, women's lives are entangled in multiple times and selves.

In what follows I analyse *Qoys Kaab* Islamic family and marriage classes in order to examine the values young women negotiate and cultivate²³⁷. I show that moral development is part of the life process, in other words, each life transition is a moment of moral development and *Qoys Kaab*, and the value ideals it espouses, is vital to teaching one group of women the skills needed to create a new morality that reflects modern-ness.

7.3 *Qoys Kaab* revisited

Qoys Kaab classes' focus on learning and enacting piety and knowledge as markers of what it means to be a modern woman living in Somaliland. Piety and knowledge are not new values in Somali society but they are enacted in new ways by young, urban women. In addition to their focus on piety and knowledge *Qoys Kaab* classes also teach women the values of spirituality, materialism, romance and love. These values are taught in harmony with each other.

Nada acknowledges that young women lack explicit knowledge of the many intricacies of marriage. She feels that women need to learn about how to prepare their bodies for marriage, about love and the wedding night, as well as about how to make their husband happy, including keeping a home and raising children. Amongst my friends and informants this knowledge was not learned from their mothers or grandmothers.

²³⁴ See Chapter 6.

²³⁵ See also Chapters 4 and 5.

²³⁶ See Shweder (2003b) for his analysis of Oriya Hindu women's life in three dimensions: outward, upward, and time. A woman's life moves outward because with time she is no longer confined the kitchen and can move more freely in the house and outside. Her life moves upward because with time she can socially and physiologically approach divinity (274).

²³⁷ See Chapter 4 for *Qoys Kaab* lectures related to women's body modifications; see Chapter 5 for parallels between *sitaat* and *Qoys Kaab*.

I suggest that in learning the realities of marriage before the wedding ceremony, educated young Somali women are perhaps better prepared for what they may face. They may still encounter conflict, troubles, and divorce, but they will have the knowledge and skill set to deal with it as best they can. Thus, as women consciously learn about marriage and family, they simultaneously cultivate the values of knowledge and piety. Knowledge and piety are not 'new' values, as shown in Chapter 5, the values prioritised by *sitaat* women in their pious understanding and practice are similar to those of women of younger generation. However, by cultivating these values and learning how to apply them before they enter marriage young women are encountering these values earlier in the life course, and they are learning how to enact them in the everyday. They are also learning how to enact them in accordance both with 'correct' notions of piety, and with values they associate with being modern, like romance.

In learning the values earlier, and how to enact them according to contemporary ideals of what it means to be modern, Nada and her students are creating a new morality. This new morality is not only applies to *Qoys Kaab* devotees, rather it demands that people in Hargeisa as a whole recognize and allow for young women to live modern lives that simultaneously enact the values of knowledge, piety, spirituality, romance, and materialism. In order to do this Nada invited her critics to come to lessons. Local sheikhs and women came, many of whom became her students.

During a conversation with Nada I asked if she drew on the support from her husband as she faced so much opposition, especially in the beginning. She responded that her husband supports *Qoys Kaab*, if she misses a class her husband tells her to go. Nada giggled, "He came once and kissed me on the head and cheek, all the girls died." The playful nature of Nada's kiss with her husband shows the importance young woman place on love and romance and *Qoys Kaab's* role in teaching it.

7.4 Knowledge and piety

For young women knowledge and piety are not separate values that require individual *Qoys Kaab* lessons, nor are they to be enacted differently in marriage compared to pre-maritally. Instead, knowledge and piety are values dependent on each other, and enacted in all aspects of a happy marriage. Additionally, it is in the life course transition towards

marriage and motherhood that potential conflicts between knowledge and piety come to the fore; however it is also the moment when the creative ways young women conceive of their union illuminate what it means to be modern. As such, new enactments of these values reveal the ways in which women are actively demanding and creating a new morality.

Young women's emphasis on knowledge and piety is not ethnographically new to Somaliland (*sitaat* women share similar values), nor to other Muslim societies. Laura Deeb (2006) also wrote about these values while working with Shia women in Beirut, Lebanon. In what follows I will situate these values in what Deeb calls "authenticated piety".

Authenticated piety

Deeb's work with the women of Hezbollah in a Beirut neighbourhood leads her to unravel how pious Shia Muslims understand 'being modern' and how they engage with and employ multiple discourses and ideas about modernness. Similarly in working with the *Qoys Kaab* women, and other young women in Somaliland, I began to understand how the values that women learn and the ways in which they enact those values reflect their desire for and creation of a new morality, a morality that incorporates modernness²³⁸. Thus, as I unpack Deeb's ethnographic and theoretical contribution to the anthropology of women in Islam, I will highlight the ways in which my friends and informants have similarly deployed knowledge and piety in conceptions of what it means to be a modern woman in Somaliland. Then I will build on Deeb's work by relating authenticated piety to value ethics, specifically how young Somali women entering or already in marriage resolve value conflict and conceptualise of a new morality.

Deeb begins by writing that the women she met, variously affiliated or not with Hezbollah, imagined themselves as a community based on their shared religious, social, and political values. She joins these values under the rubric of 'public piety,' referencing Anderson's (2006) imagined communities as based on a simultaneous performance of public piety. Public piety is the public practice of faith based on an interpretation of Islam that she terms 'authenticated Islam.' Authentication refers to her informants' sense of a shift in religious

²³⁸ I use 'modernness,' like Deeb (2006), to avoid pluralising the concept of modernity, and to instead recognize the plurality of "experience, interpretation, and understanding" with which Somali women struggle with on a daily basis (15).

understandings and practices. Thus, the values of public piety are authenticated when one understands and practices Islam 'correctly.' For her informants 'correct' understanding and practice involves sacrificing one's time, money and life to help others; and supporting the Resistance against the Israeli occupation. Thus there is a strong belief in both spiritual and material progress, a continued forward effort toward change from what existed before. She suggests that perhaps the term *movement* is better suited for her informants (Deeb 2006, 8).

Although Deeb's informants are contextually 'a world away' from the *Qoys Kaab* and university students in Somaliland there are striking similarities. The young women of *Qoys Kaab* imagine themselves as a community of sisters (including their divine sisters), where they share religious, social, and nationalistic values. These values inform their notions of 'correct' understanding and practice of Islam, part of their group display of public piety. Correct understanding and practice for the *Qoys Kaab* women is a key pillar of the lessons they attend every Friday. However, this must also extend into marriage, for a woman who does not apply the lessons taught in *Qoys Kaab* is not practicing correctly. Additionally, correct understanding and practice are continual processes and part of what it means to be modern. Once a woman graduates from *Qoys Kaab* she must turn to her husband for guidance in her spiritual progress. He is the pillar of the family and a pillar of correct Islamic knowledge (except for when he isn't, and a woman is encouraged to turn *only* to prayer). Such a process also implies a type of progress, where women strive to change from what existed before. Progress for many of the young women is spiritual progress, understanding and practicing Islam 'correctly', coupled with material progress. Material progress is present along many scales; it includes state development feeding into nationalistic values, it also includes familial and personal accumulation of material goods which is important in the courtship process, and throughout marriage as a symbol of romance and love. Thus, the change that women are working towards through authenticated piety comprises a movement where *Qoys Kaab* women are working towards a new moral argument that at times conflicts with the rest of society; for them this moral change begins one marriage, and one family at a time.

Modern-ness and being modern

Young women's desire for a new morality based on religious, social, nationalistic, and material values reflects an alternative model for an ideal modern woman. Young,

educated, urban women do not necessarily see themselves as the brides, wives, and mothers that Burton (1854), Lewis (1961, 1981, 1998), Kapteijns (1999, 2009), Kapteijn and Ali (2001), Gardner and El-Bushra (2004), or Warsame (2002) write about; instead women challenge simplistic narratives, poetic imaginaries, and flattened narratives of victimhood or resistance. They envision a courtship filled with romance, one predicated on exchange of perfumes, watches, and sweets, and one of secret meetings on the bus or in private rooms at restaurants. This is not to say that the *Qoys Kaab* model of modernity is the only one in Somaliland or globally; there is an abundance of literature on Islam and modernit(ies) (Abu-Lughod 1998; Carey 2012; Hirschkind 2001, 2006; Mahmood 2012; Marsden 2008a, 2008b, 2012). Instead, the *Qoys Kaab* women are leading (in Somaliland) a model of modernity where Islam is not in cultural resistance to ‘Western²⁴⁰’ modernity. Thus, in using the term ‘modern-ness’ or referring to ‘being modern,’ I avoid homogenizing the concept of modernity, and rather recognise the plurality of “experience, interpretation, and understanding” this concept holds (Deeb 2006, 15).

One key intervention in the new morality that *Qoys Kaab* women raise is that spiritual progress is part of being modern. This is revolutionary because many male, religious elders (and others) view modernity as a Western construct that is incompatible with Islam. One way that *Qoys Kaab* lessons construct this facet of the new morality is through discussions about dating and having a boyfriend before marriage, something many male, religious elders would reject. Instead the young women, guided by Nada and her team of experts, consider the boundaries that protect the sanctity of an unmarried woman’s purity before marriage. One way a woman can do this is in the way she speaks to her boyfriend on the phone. Nada instructed that we should not use a sweet tone and tell him sweet words; those are only to be used when we are married. To show us this she role-played a ‘good’ phone conversation as compared to a ‘bad’ one. In the ‘good’ phone conversation she spoke with little voice inflection, she was direct, and she kept the call short. In the ‘bad’ phone conversation she made kissing noises, spoke in a sing song voice, and used affectionate nick-names. This lesson is built on throughout the course where later we learned how to please our husbands, including using a sweet tone, nick-names, and kissing him when he returned home from work.

²⁴⁰Here ‘Western’ refers to the essentialised notion of the ‘West’ that my informants have created. For many the ‘West’ represents ‘Americanized’ values embodied through programmes shown on satellite TV like *My Super Sweet 16*, or *Keeping up with the Kardashians*.

Another way that spiritual progress is part of being modern is the way in which love is constructed and shown in the image of the Prophet, a key point of argument for some, including religious leaders, who claim that modern society is incompatible with the Prophet's era. They are not arguing that mobile phones and TVs themselves are incompatible, but rather the influence they may have on women through consumption of immoral content like romance films that promote physical intimacy before marriage. Instead for the women of *Qoys Kaab* these are not incompatible if understood and practiced 'correctly', for example through watching Norwegian-Somali sheikhs on TV give sermons about marriage practices and the meaning of love. Throughout our lessons we learned that the Prophet deeply loved his wives, especially Khadija. He showed his love by helping her with house work, including cooking. Thus, a marriage founded on being modern is one in which the husband shows his love for his wife by helping her with the house work and children when she is sick.

It is by looking into the values taught in *Qoys Kaab* that the ways in which an alternative model of the ideal modern woman has emerged becomes clear. This model maintains the same values as other women in society, and previous generations but the enactment of those values through shifts in value hierarchy has changed. Women always wanted spiritual knowledge and progress (take the *sitaat* women in Gabiley who built the first women's mosque), but that now entails demonstrating knowledge and practice of authenticated Islam. This authenticated Islam, as related to a sense of progress, includes being dedicated to self-improvement, and bettering the community (particularly by teaching other women how to have a 'good' and 'successful' marriage). Women not only need to shine inside and outside, they also need to teach others how to shine; and the best way to do that is by having a strong marriage and family.

7.5 Value hierarchy and value conflict

So far this chapter has presented a case for a new morality created through a folding in of Islamic traditions and based on a form of authenticated, or understandings of correct Islam; a view where Islamising influences are not necessarily engaged in a struggle with modernity, but instead spiritual progress is an aspect of the modern. I have suggested that the women of *Qoys Kaab* understand and practice what they believe is a correct notion of Islam founded on the values of knowledge and piety; they strive for a sense of spiritual progress that aligns with the values of materialism, love, romance, and knowledge. So far I

have merely alluded to the potential for value conflict predicated on incompatible enactments of value hierarchy. It would appear that the *Qoys Kaab* women are forming a movement where innovative ideals of moral womanhood are taking shape and proving structurally and institutionally influential. However, focusing on the realities of courtship, dating, marriage, and family outside the *Qoys Kaab* classroom presents a different picture; a picture where young women are in the midst of actively creating, debating, discussing, negotiating, and sometimes failing at this “new” morality. In what follows I build on the theoretical understanding of the values that inform choices in body modification presented in Chapter 1, and present examples of value conflict related to the moment of marriage. In doing this I hope to show that the realities of marriage and family can be difficult, and not often as ‘smooth sailing’ as they are presented to be in *Qoys Kaab*. Instead women may idealize the values of authenticated piety as they are in the process of forging a new morality.

Values illuminate important elements of a society, or indicate what is considered important to an individual. These elements produce hierarchies of beliefs, ideas and things; indicating which may be more or less valued. For the *Qoys Kaab* women knowledge and piety are taught as paramount values as they prepare for marriage. However, love, romance, spirituality, and materialism are also values that structure relations between people as they enter into marriage. These are not in contradiction to knowledge and piety, rather the transition from courtship to marriage and family reveals potential relations of subordination between values; in other words leads them to re-order and ‘rank’ values differently, reflecting a different set of priorities at each life stage. In what follows I present several examples of the values women negotiate, debate and discuss in their relationships; thus showing how different contexts influence the understanding and practice of values (Robbins 2007, 296-297).

Sometimes a paramount value may be based on an ideal, and this can be rooted in “axial age traditions” where a more morally perfect world exists. In such a case, a more morally perfect world is the ‘other world’ where all of one’s hopes are fulfilled as part of one’s destiny. Alternatively, a value ideal may be an ideal that is part of one’s test of *dunya*. In such cases women reframe a value as one they must sacrifice and suffer for since ‘tests’ are part of Allah’s plan and necessary to enter the ‘other world.’ Thus, value hierarchy can be reframed according to temporal understanding as ones that are cultivated as part of the

life of 'this world,' versus values that are always beyond reasonable attainment and can only exist for an individual in the life of the 'other world.' For example, some women may say that love has always eluded them and they consider it a paramount value for the life of the other world. Thus, when they fail at love in the life of this world, they have a different paramount value, perhaps piety helps them enter the other world, or perhaps endurance helps withstand the test of a 'bad' husband.

I show that although piety, spirituality, love, romance, and materialism are important values in women's marital imaginary, they are values that can be in conflict and may change over time as women transition to wives and mothers, particularly when they face unforeseen realities. Changing one's understanding and enactment of values due to the realities of courtship and marriage is not considered a failure; rather these realities comprise life's challenges and the test of *dunya*. Women continue to learn skills and abilities to deal with new and unforeseen challenges, skills and abilities that help them cultivate a balance not only in show much they may shine, but also in acting well in the face of unexpected difficulty.

Piety

Piety is considered to be a paramount value throughout the entire life course, and most women would never consider it in tension with other values. This would fit an ideal Dumontian understanding of the values present in any stably organised society: a society in which individuals encounter few moral problems because the paramount value never changes. However, as women transition to the role of wife and mother, they often encounter problems or challenges. For example, during courtship piety comes into conflict with intimacy related to dating.

For some men and women, dating of any form is morally acceptable, as long as it is not publicly visible. As a result many young men and women meet at restaurants that have private rooms with tinted windows. The privacy afforded in these locations allows for talking and moves towards physical intimacy like kissing, hand holding and possibly more. However, this sort of dating is restricted to those that can afford it. Young men and women who cannot afford to meet in restaurants negotiate alternative private spaces. Halimo, was an uneducated, live-in house girl for whom both time and money constrained her efforts to date. It wasn't often that she was allowed time away from the house to meet

people, and she often didn't have the money to travel far to meet a date. The men she dated were in a similar predicament, they often lacked the money to take her to a restaurant.

Halimo, like many young women, met her dates after dark and within walking distance of the house. These secret dates often took place away from the main road and on dark corners to allow for maximum privacy. Sometimes she would arrange these dates for when she was sent on an errand to the shop, simply telling her boss that she had to go to several shops to get what was needed. Other times Halimo would get formal permission to go out to meet a date. When this was the case Halimo dressed up, and would wear perfume and make up. When she returned from her dates she would assure her boss that they 'just talked'. Later, she would show me selfies her date sent to her phone, or share the candies he brought her. And after he returned home, he would call her, and they would talk late into the night.

Halimo's story doesn't necessarily sound like a negotiation of piety, but she was very aware of the modesty and privacy she needed to balance in order for her to date within the pious domain set out by society. Halimo not only had to act piously for her boss and for her friends, but she also had to negotiate a balance with the man she dated. Halimo, like many other young women hoping to marry, found herself in a predicament. She felt it was important to get to know a man before she could consider marrying him, and for her this meant going on dates. At the same time she had to make sure she wasn't too eager with her questions to get to know him, she had to make sure she didn't succumb to too much physical intimacy, and she couldn't be too 'easy' or 'available' for fear he may think she is the same with other men (even though many women dated and spoke to several men at once).

Halimo was eager to get married, several of her friends had recently gotten married and she expressed to me that she didn't want to be left behind. Thus, it was advantageous for her to speak to several men and find the one that was right for her. But, she had to balance this with the understanding that young women who dated 'too much' or were too easy and available were the kind of girls you 'play around with' and 'have fun with' but not someone that you marry. Thus it was a difficult and sometimes confusing place of tension: you need to get to know a man before you marry him, but don't get to know him too much

(or get to know too many men in the process), or you risk getting labelled 'loose,' which could harm your chances at marriage.

Halimo's negotiation between shining enough to be considered 'fun and playful,' yet not shining too much so as to still be considered pious and modest was echoed in many *Qoys Kaab* lessons. Halimo, like many women, finds herself in a vulnerable position as she works on cultivating an ethical self that aligns with the values she associates with being a modern woman.

Knowledge

The value of women's access to formal education comes into tension with women's household and familial duties. Both are forms of knowledge predicated on skill and ability, and both require a type of duty; however the duty women have to their families and home can, at times take precedence over the cultivation of knowledge through formal education. Unlike piety, knowledge is not always a paramount value. In urban Somaliland knowledge is today gained at school and university, through books, informational lectures on YouTube, and articles shared on Facebook. Schools and universities teach secular subjects but through the lens of Islam; for example, English language resources will be edited to remove mention of the consumption of alcohol, and some schools and universities will remove reference to dating or Christmas. All schools and universities have Islamic studies, or Quran and Arabic as required subjects. Additionally, Quranic schools are important in the early years of children's education. Madrassas are often the first schools children attend. Many young men and women continue Quranic studies in parallel to 'secular' secondary school or university.

Although such academic knowledge is a key value for many women, not all men want educated wives. Many of my male university students who were very open to discussing topics like reproduction, engaging in debates on feminism, and enjoyed being challenged by the young women in their classes, did not want to marry a woman as intelligent as themselves (yet they still want her to be intelligent²⁴²), or the young women in the class. Not all men express this sentiment, yet it was not uncommon for men to outright say this or to allude to their preference for less educated women.

²⁴² The young men that I taught often expressed this tension that leads me to understand that many men want an intelligent woman, just not so intelligent that it makes her disobedient.

One long-time friend, Nasra, found herself in a situation where her desire for knowledge was not supported by her boyfriend²⁴³. About half way through my fieldwork Nasra confided in me that she was dating someone. She had kept her relationship secret from her friends and family for almost a year, and she confided in me because she was considering marrying him. She often met him in his office, where he would help her with her studies. They met on Fridays when campus was empty except for the security guards who would leave them alone. Nasra met him during prayer time when it was thought she was at the mosque. The secrecy of Nasra's relationship can be interpreted many ways, however she said it was so she could get to know him before committing to marry him. She knew that if she was public with their relationship she would be judged to have violated pious standards.

As their relationship progressed the potential to marry him became a reality. One day over dinner Nasra told me that they had been discussing marriage. He wanted to marry her right away, and she was happy about that. However, he said that when they marry Nasra must quit her masters and her job, he expected her to stay at home and start a family. She told him she needed to think it over.

Nasra was upset, she had already broken an engagement to an older man living in London that her family arranged. This older man also wanted her to quit her studies and work, and she was expected to start a family immediately after marriage. When she refused to marry him she caused conflict within her family. She had thought her current boyfriend was different, he was younger, from a neighbouring country, and even helped her with her master's coursework. She was deciding if she loved this man enough to give up on her dreams, or if pursuing further education was more important for her at this point in her life.

²⁴³ I have known Nasra since 2009 when she was an eager undergraduate student. We learned a lot from each other, and when I left Hargeisa in 2010 we kept in touch. In the time that I was away she completed one masters, and when I returned in 2014 she was studying for her second masters. She worked for a government office that communicated regularly with foreigners from the US, UK, and Italy, and she took her work very seriously. She started her second masters to inform her work and to help propel her to her next goal in the public sector. Ever since I have known Nasra she has calculated every action to help her achieve her ultimate educational and professional goal of becoming a lawyer like her late uncle.

Over the next several weeks Nasra joined the *Qoys Kaab* classes, partly because she was avoiding making a decision. After one class, we went out for dinner and Nasra confided again; she had broken up with her boyfriend. She could not give up her studies or her work. For her knowledge and education took priority over love. Shortly after I left Hargeisa in 2015 Nasra sent me a WhatsApp message, she had gotten married (and now has a baby boy). She married a man who was closer to her age, who supported her education, and was happy that she worked. She describes herself as happy because she met a man who understood and supported the values important to her, including a love based on respect.

Materialism

In this period of urban consumerism taking hold in Somaliland the material as an expression of love and romance (even marriage and womanhood²⁴⁴) is an important aspect of relationships for many young women. For some, particularly young men who can't afford the rising cost of weddings, it might be easy to equate young women's "consumption with triviality" (Masquelier 2005a, 63), and to criticise young women for having a "symptomatic loss of substance and seriousness" (Masquelier 2005a, 63) when it comes to the correct values and feelings that ought to inform love relationships. However, it is important not to assume that consumption is necessarily tied to the emergence of wealth, nor that people with low income are misguided about their priorities when they desire and consume non-essential commodities; rather these practices may satiate alternative needs and desires (Masquelier 2005a; cf. Miller 1994). The desire for an excess of commodities may help young women connect with an imagined distant world that is not very well known; a world imagined through greater connectivity with family abroad, images on Facebook and social media, as well as Indian and Arab dramas on TV.

As this seemingly insatiable demand for material takes hold, there is a form of "anticomsumptionism" (Masquelier 2005a; cf. Friedman 1991) put forth by Islamic revivalist discourses, like those projected on the TV at the gym, or taught by Sheikh Mohamed Gadhle at Qoys Kaab²⁴⁵. In fact, many religious leaders speak against placing high value in material goods, equating it with 'western' society. Thus, as young women increasingly desire expressions of love and romance through material goods, they are also cognisant of

²⁴⁴ For more see Masquelier 2005a.

²⁴⁵ The dissemination of media does not necessarily lead to a standardization of Islamic practice (Masquelier 2009, 15).

the value of modesty in avoiding greed and gluttony. This tension is not so easily balanced as Magol illustrates when I helped her in the months leading to her wedding.

Before Magol was married she often spoke of what she hoped her relationship with her husband would be like. She wanted to cultivate a relationship filled with the values and feelings of love and romance. For her this meant cooking her husband's favourite meal and having it ready for him when he returned from work. She spoke of lighting candles during dinner, and wearing a short dress, and 'sweet' smelling perfume for him. For her, and most women, romance was cultivated through material representations that elicited a feeling of partner intimacy by getting to know one another. If deployed correctly, romance would lead to a loving relationship. Material goods, romance and love go hand in hand, and at the same time include the notion of modesty. Expressions of romance and love must be private, something to be shared and viewed only by the couple.

Magol invited me to join her as she prepared for her wedding. We visited beauty salons so she could try on wedding dresses, we spoke of her diet to fit into the wedding dresses, the series of hair treatments she would schedule even though she was wearing the hijab, and how she didn't want to wear too much make up. Her preparations rested heavily on the preparation of her body through various modifications and materials. Her husband sent her instalments of money to prepare herself for the wedding. Each week she accumulated more clothes, make-up, and hair oils. He sent money so her family could arrange to rent a house for two months where they were to have intercourse for the first time and live together for the first time. In many ways Magol's wedding preparations are no different from anywhere else in the world. However, her value of the material aspects of marriage in the context of Somali history reflects a new period of plenty (for many).

Magol's preparations not only included talking about how she would cultivate love and romance in their daily lives, or the preparations required for her wedding, but she also mentally and physically prepared herself for the wedding night. She was restricting her diet to fit into the rented wedding dress and to look nice for her husband on their wedding night. She was also preparing how she wanted her first time having intercourse to go. In preparing herself mentally she relied on material items; for example, she bought a short dress to wear on the wedding night. Magol's emphasis on material clothing and accessories is not an uncommon desire, although it is an uncommon reality for many

women who do not marry men working abroad. By marrying a man who worked abroad Magol could afford the luxuries many other women dream of. Magol bought excesses of clothes, scarves, handbags, make-up, and perfumes. She had two large suitcases full of new items all in preparation for his arrival. Magol's emphasis on the material is not uncommon, and is part of a woman's 'test' for her potential husband; however, the newly placed value on materials in excess rather than material well-being is worth noting.

Romance

Romance is a 'new' value taking shape in Somaliland. Romance in Somaliland is most often expressed through material goods. There is an emerging industry accommodating the material aspects of romance, including a flower shop, a card shop, and increasing demand for cakes and small gifts (like watches). For young women romance, and the gifts that are an integral part of it, is an important part of any relationship, especially during courtship.

I was asked to give a *Qoys Kaab* lecture on the topic of my choice. I proposed to speak about getting to know a man before you agree to marry him, and I proposed to present with two of my friends. I intended to provide a list of sample questions the young women could ask a potential husband. During one of the planning meetings my two friends emphasised the need for romance in a relationship before you agree to marry a man. For them romance was a true expression of his love, and in turn his commitment to marry you. For example, for Nasra, part of the romance with her 'secret' boyfriend was the build-up of anticipation, excitement, and the yet-to-come that their 'secret' and somewhat illicit meetings fostered. He showed his love for her by helping her with her master's homework, and their romance blossomed intellectually and physically rather than materially. He didn't necessarily give her gifts, at least none that she mentioned to me (because her family would be suspicious), but he did give her his time and thoughts. The physical intimacy of sitting together in his office with the door closed, and on the weekend (Friday is the only day off) when the campus was empty save a few watchmen, created an emotionally charged and potentially romantic environment.

While we prepared the presentation I made PowerPoint slides that referenced big issues couples in the UK or the US might have thought about before marriage: education, children, child-care, etc. At the same time my friends made slides that listed small gifts you could get the man or he could get you that expressed love. Later, during the presentation

at *Qoys Kaab* the students said my slides represented my 'Western' life, they even laughed when I suggested they speak about how many children they want before getting married (even though most women listed a number much lower than all the men I asked). The students were far more interested in gifts of material items to express and show romance. It was far more interesting and important to cultivate romance in the courtship, as this leads to love and a happy marriage than to plan the details of the marital life.

The students were keen to emphasise romance, but only in a context of piety. A young woman cannot show too much interest, otherwise he will think she is easy. At the same time, she must show enough interest for him to want to marry her. Small romantic gifts were a solution to this value conflict. Cards, a watch, candies, and perfume were all acceptable gifts that didn't seem too eager, yet maintained romantic interest. These gifts created the sense of anticipation and excitement that Nasra felt in her romantic encounters with her 'secret' boyfriend. Women sometimes gave men gifts, but none of my friends gave me explicit examples.

The lesson my friends and I presented on romance echoed throughout many of the *Qoys Kaab* lectures. We were taught how to prepare our bodies for our husbands, how to prepare our homes, and how to greet our husband after a long day at work. Through small romantic actions in each of these situations we would be able to maintain the love in our relationships.

Love

Love, although not a new concept in the marital imaginary it is a 'newly' prioritised value in Somali women's conceptions of what it means to be modern. Many young women desire and some expect love in their relationships (see also Ahearn 2001; Carey 2012; Clark and Mathur 2012; Cole 2012; Cole and Thomas 2009; Constable 2003; Hart 2007; Hennink, Diamond, Cooper 1999; Jankowiak 2008; Kaya 2009; Klima 2004). For some women, like Halimo, love is strongly desired and it is demonstrated by the gifts and money she receives. For Halimo, the more material items a man gives her, the more he demonstrates his love for her. Halimo's understanding of love resonates with that of many women, all over the world. But it is by no means universal; other women like Basr, express and experience love differently. For her love is shown through sexual satisfaction, devotion, commitment, and

happiness with each other. However, for Basr, like for many women, love is not always realised, or love fades and the relationship fails.

During my PhD fieldwork my friend Nasteexo married a man as his second wife. Her family, primarily her mother, warned her against marrying him²⁴⁶. Despite the consternation of her family Nasteexo followed her heart because she was in love²⁴⁷. Over time Nasteexo had subsequently expressed dissatisfaction with her marriage and at times she was certain the first wife was turning her husband against her.

Nasteexo and her husband began fighting more over his *qaat* consumption, over what she felt was an unequal distribution of money between the wives, and over his failure to buy her a piece of land and to build a house for them like he did for the first wife. Nasteexo visited *faliye* for help with this crisis²⁴⁸, but their relationship slowly began to unravel. Eventually Nasteexo left her husband and moved to her sister's on the other side of town. She stayed there for several weeks, refusing to return even after he called and sent his clansmen to bring her back. Eventually he came in person and she agreed to return to their house.

Their relationship seemed steady until I visited Nasteexo's house one day when she told me about a recent fight they had. She woke up from the afternoon nap to pray, and do some errands in the town. She left the house, taking the bus to the market. When she returned she went to the bedroom to hang her *hijab*, moving quietly while her husband slept. He eventually woke and they had intercourse. She walked to the toilet, leaving her underwear on the floor. When she returned she found him checking her underwear for semen from

²⁴⁶ In Islam a man can marry up to four wives "on the condition he treats them equally and justly" (Warsame 2002, 56). Many Somali men take more than one wife, although often not without much deliberation (as I observed). Warsame (2002) writes that religious men in Somaliland have discouraged Somali women from pushing for reforms on polygamy, thus women rarely issue complaints through the judiciary or the *xeer* about their husbands' taking another wife. Women may complain of "desertion, failure of the husband to pay maintenance, or wife battering" (57) and these issues are usually solved through the *xeer* and meetings of male relatives (although many of the *sitaat* women I met act as female deliberators on such issues and intervene in marital disputes).
²⁴⁷ Warsame (2002) writes that many women have limited educational and marketable skills and thus view marriage as a means of economic sustainability; including marrying men with other wives (57). Although Warsame's statement reflects a sentiment I heard from many women, the women I spoke to in polygamous relationships did not consider this to reflect their situation or their desire to marry a man with more than one wife. Instead, they described deep passion, romance, lust, and love for the man and were willing to negotiate his affection, maintenance, and family. For a counter narrative collected by Warsame see Appendix G.

²⁴⁸ See Chapter 6 for more on *faliye* and divination.

another man, a man he believed she may have visited when she left the house while he was still sleeping. Nasteexo was extremely upset that her husband did not trust her. They fought and he left the house.

Over the next several months Nasteexo's husband didn't return home. Nasteexo was too stubborn to call him, or to answer his calls and pleas from his clansmen. After he stopped sending her rent money she demanded a divorce. For her, and many women, the allowance he gave her represented his duty of care as obliged by Islam and customary law. By not sending her money he was breaking part of their marriage contract, he was forgoing his duty because he didn't trust Nasteexo. Instead he should have sought an intervention from her family or clan elders for alleged infidelity, where he would have been proven incorrect. For Nasteexo his negligence in financial duty, and his lack of trust was a signal that their love was broken. For Nasteexo, one part of her love for him was based on what material goods he could promise her. Many values that women desire in their marriages are intertwined and often in conflict with each other.

7.6 Discussion

Trends in analysis of women's role in society and marriage are valuable to understanding modern marriage practices, however I find fault with the broad brush stroke much analysis puts forth (Lewis 1961, 1981, 1993, 1998). The young women that I met are no longer 'pawns' for peace between clans (although this may still take place in rural areas that encounter clan disputes), yet clan, politics, and class remain important factors in marriage (if not for the girl than potentially for her family).

Clan remains influential in marital arrangements. Firstly, politics has new significance in marriage practices specifically because political parties are based on clan. Political ambition and policy preference are not only factors in a family's approval of a potential marriage but they are also indirectly based on clan. Secondly, although there will be wealth disparity within clans, there is also wealth disparity between clans. For example, the minority clans are still discriminated against and many times their forms of income are relegated to 'impure' trades like cutting hair, performing FGC, and leather work. These lower income professions limit their class mobility and their marriage potential. Finally, many young women may marry their neighbour or classmates but Hargeisa city is inadvertently organised by clan. Thus, a house girl who lives north of the river bed has little

chance of meeting a young man living south of the river bed. However amongst my young female informants' clan preference in marriage is encouraged by their parents as a form of 'insurance' and 'trust.' By marrying in the clan, young women explained, parents can 'know' the future husband and his family. Despite the preferences of their parents, young women expressed their desire to build a relationship on "understanding and trust," not clan or sub-clan.

In addition to Islamic and traditional law, marriage practices are influenced by the values of love, romance, spirituality, and materialism (in addition to clan, politics, and class) which are all important values for women in conceptualising and creating the ideal marriage and husband. Much academic literature on love and romance in Somali society have focused on its prevalence in poetry and song (see Andrzejewski 1985, 2011a, 2011b; Burton 1854; Kapteijns 1999, 2009; Kapteijns and Ali 2001; Lewis 1961, 1981; Orwin 1993, 2000a, 2000b, 2001a, 2001b, 2006; Samatar 1980); however only Sir Richard Burton's text written in 1854 attempts to describe or analyse the lived experiences of love and romance, or even marriage. According to Andrzejewski, love poetry served as a tribute to the poet's future or hoped-for bride, rather than an intimate declaration of love. It was meant to facilitate good relations with the girl and her family (2011b). The gradual transition from recited love poetry to modern love songs, which are recorded and played on radios around the world, suggests that romance and love have long been part of the marital imaginary and will remain fixtures in modern love and marriage.

"Situations of change often upend previously stable value hierarchies, generating the kinds of conflicts that push the morality of choice and freedom to the foreground" (Robbins 2007a, 311). *Qoys Kaab* illuminates a new way of being modern taking shape in Somaliland. In Chapters 2 and 5 I describe how young, urban women enact the values of knowledge and piety differently than their mothers and grandmothers. Young urban women have different conceptions of spirituality. They tend to be influenced by a form of 'revival Islam'²⁴⁹, whereas their mothers and grandmothers tend to follow a 'mystic strain' of Islam. For the women of *Qoys Kaab* their understanding and practice of spirituality represents the 'correct' form of Islam one ought to follow. It represents a form of spiritual progress away from what they view as 'tradition' and closer to the type of conscious and conscientious commitment they consider 'correct.'

²⁴⁹ See Chapter 1 for more.

However, enactment of what is 'correct' during preparation for life change (to wives and mothers), signals an orientation towards an imaginary of modern-ness that does not necessarily equate with correct ideals of revival Islam . Instead young women's quest for a morality that folds both traditional and modern traditions illustrates the ways in which their understanding and practice of Islam takes place in the context of a transitional discourse, and is informed by the piety as well as materialism, love, and romance. However, as women seek balance between these values there is potential for value conflict. The overarching values of knowledge and piety are not only understood and practiced differently than previous generations, but also between women. Values such as materialism, love, and romance also take primacy. There are often conflicts between materialism and modesty, piety and romance, or love and duty. In moments of conflict women become conscious of making choices. Conscious choice making highlights a specific type of freedom, a freedom of conscious deliberation, discussion, debate and choice within the domains of culture.

'The making of morality' rests in conscious choice making as a freedom bound by cultural domains. Young *Qoys Kaab* women engage in conscious deliberation of values like piety (in attending *Qoys Kaab* classes), they discuss 'correct' enactment of virtue (in the lessons taught), they debate the domains of culture (like when Sheikh Mohamed Gadhle lectured the women on 'Islamic *meher*' money and they engaged in a discussion and question session with him and later with Nada), and they enact choice (whether in evoking the *dua istikhara*, or a simpler choice to wear a short dress as a form of romance).

In conclusion, by building on explorations of temporality in the context of change, transformation, and life course development this chapter ultimately shows that the life of this world involves processes of moral development. Moral development over the life course involves a focus on knowledge: self-knowledge, spiritual knowledge, secular knowledge, and 'worldly knowledge.' Women's relationships with their body, with women in the community, with the divine, and with their husbands are vital to the cultivation of knowledge. As women seek knowledge they often encounter value conflict, particularly in times of change and transformation, but they pursue knowledge as part of their destiny. For to seek knowledge of themselves, the divine, the secular and the greater world in the life of this world is aimed at bettering their life in the other world. For example, if women

get to know their bodies and themselves better, they become closer to God. They can interpret the signs He sends them to better act in the present. Knowledge and action are aimed towards the best good in any given moment, even if it is unrealised until the life of the other world.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1 A counter narrative

This thesis has highlighted the voices and experiences of diverse Somali women throughout the life course. It has focused on four main intimate relationships: the relationship women have with their bodies, other women in the community, the divine, and their husbands. In analysing these relationships I have shown that Somali women are more than passive victims or agentive rebels. Instead I problematize these moral concepts to show that although women encounter social inequality, patriarchal oppression, and subjugation they also actively negotiate, debate, and deliberate what it means to live an ethical life in Somaliland. By illuminating the conscious reflection women engage in I offer a counter narrative to the often one-dimensional 'single story' presented about Somali women.

Although this thesis addresses and builds on common threads used to describe Somali women, it aims to show the complexity of life. It weaves together experiences of FGC, skin whitening, domestic abuse, sisterhood, resisting male elders, love, sex, and spirituality. It is by weaving these experiences together that singular objects of analysis gain a robust meaning and can be contextualised as part of a bigger story. For example, Somali women's experiences of FGC are often de-contextualised and analysed in a manner that reduces women to their body parts. Instead this thesis locates FGC as a physical experience, as an ethical practice, a process of gendering, religious, and as traumatic and potentially dangerous.

This suggests that FGC is not a singular experience that young girls have when they are age six, nor only revisited during menstruation, sex, or child birth. Instead it is a practice that influences women's health seeking behaviours, their beauty regimes, their marriage practices, and their piety. It is also a practice that is currently being debated between young and old women, urban and rural women, female leaders and male religious elders, and local women and the international community. Practices like FGC, and the concepts it is associated with, must be contextualised in the many domains of life, and throughout the life course.

This thesis also counters tropes in popular culture about women in Islam, and builds on existing literature in the anthropology of Islam. Rather than arguing for women's agency, or lack thereof, this thesis aims to explore women's moments of conscious reflection as part of everyday deliberation and contestation. This allows for analysis that refrains from applying moral judgements to everyday practices (like FGC is 'right' or 'wrong', or arguing for women's agency when it aligns with personal morals), and instead contextualises women's actions over time and through the analytical lens of value ethics.

Locating the everyday in a larger historical frame shows the processes that have formed and influenced the current institutions that women live within. And, taking the decision whether or not to act in any given situation as part of a process of conscious reflection suggests that women deliberate what it means to live an ethical life. This thesis, then, attempts to act as a bridge for women's voices and experiences to help understand the values that inform every day, ethical life as Muslim women in Somaliland. It also shows that the perceived divide between Us and Other is perhaps not that big after all; rather the 'correct' understanding and practice of values differs just as much across generations, genders, and location in Somaliland as it does in the UK or the US.

8.2 Life course entanglement

This thesis presents an updated theory of entanglement by illuminating a simultaneity of moralities, time, and selves over the life course. Although analysis of women's bodies, sisterhoods, divine relationships, and marriages has not necessarily followed a sequential life course narrative, it has described 13 key phases of the life course²⁵⁰.

This model highlights women's life in terms of changes in the body, learning and attainment of virtues, and changes in roles. Women transition through phases of bodily transformation when their clitoris is pressed as a baby, after FGC, after their first menarche and first sexual intercourse, and after childbirth and menopause. These changes were explicitly highlighted during a *Qoys Kaab* Islamic family and marriage class lecture by Dr. Shukri and echoed in my participant observation of women's intimate relationships.

²⁵⁰ (1) *afaartan bax*, (2) FGC, (3) wearing hijab to school, (4) begin household responsibilities, (5) finish reading the Quran for the first time, (6) first menarche, (7) secondary school, (8) university, (9) marriage and first sexual intercourse, (10) childbirth, (11) motherhood, (12) menopause, and finally (13) death of husband.

Women transition through phases as they learn and attain virtues associated with specific practices like wearing the hijab for the first time, reading the Quran for the first time, completing secondary school and university, and becoming mothers. These phases relate to the processes of implicitly and explicitly learning the virtues of modesty and piety, and the attainment of knowledge. Finally, women transition through phases related to their changing roles, including the *afaartan bax*, beginning of household duties, marriage, motherhood, and finally widowhood.

The *afaartan bax* signals that a baby is finally a 'person' in having survived for 40 days after birth; it is a ritual celebrating the health of a baby and the mother's recovery from birth. A young girl will begin taking on household duties around the same time she is cut and begins wearing the hijab to school. It is at this time that young girls begin the process of gendering; their dress, demeanor, and interactions with males will begin to come under scrutiny. At marriage a young woman is no longer a daughter and sister, she is now a wife and soon to be a mother. She takes on new responsibilities and must learn new skills to reconcile the realities of marriage. Finally, in old age and after the death of the husband women come to rely on their sons and daughters-in-law to provide for their basic needs; but this will only come to fruition if she has mothered well.

I also argue that the life course consists of five simultaneous movements: inward, outward, upward, forward and backward, all through the dimension of time. Women move inward and outward as part of a process of ethical self-cultivation based on a dialectical relationship between the first person subjective "I" that is 'created' and the third person gaze. In Chapter 4 I described the tension between the first and third person as located in a moral border zone, or a woman's clothing. I showed that it is through women's choice of dress, or her armour that 'the self' a woman projects outward is negotiated, and sometimes misinterpreted through the consumptive gaze of men. It is through practice, and sometimes failure that women learn to balance their insides and outsides and live an ethical life.

At the same time that women negotiate the male gaze as part of their process of ethical self-cultivation, they also enter into a relationship with God. As women work on themselves and get to know themselves, they also come to know God; and knowing God requires knowing oneself. Women create a oneness with God, and move upward closer to the divine. They are aware of His gaze over all that they do, and they respond to His gaze.

Women's ethical self-cultivation is also predicated on the dialectical relationship with the sisterhoods they form, both divine and of this world. It is through sisterhoods that women learn the skills and abilities needed to have a successful marriage and family, and how to deal with unexpected realities that they may face. Sisterhoods can intervene in marital disputes, they can advise women on how to deal with conflict, and they teach women the 'correct' understanding and practice of Islam. Through the learning of practical skills and the attainment of knowledge women come to learn the virtues of benevolence, generosity, and solidarity; whether through more mystical forms of Islam like *sitaat*, or more textually based forms of Islam like *Qoys Kaab*. In this process of knowledge and skill attainment women come to value the gaze of other women in the community as part of their ethical self-formation. Simultaneously, women praise the first women of Islam, God, and the Prophet Muhammed, and in the process they become closer to God.

Women often turn to divination, and/or prayer during crisis. Through close analysis of these divine 'encounters' or 'conversations' I argue that women work on time towards what they believe to be their destiny. Specifically, when women narrate their past to diviners or describe their troubles to God during prayer, this suggests narrative is a technology of the imagination. Women are acting in the present, (re)creating the past, and creating a hopeful future where they can be more, have more, and do more than they presently do. It is through narrative that they work on time, simultaneously on the past, present, and (near/faraway) future. Thus, women's lives not only move inward, outward, and upwards towards the divine, they also move forward and backward through time.

Many women visit *faliye* or perform the *dua istikhara* for crises related to love, marriage, or children. They are 'working' towards specific goals that they believe are part of their destiny, among many other hopes. Once they communicate with the divine they must act on His guidance, whether through the *faliye's* interpretation of the divine, or by identifying the signs, symbols, and feelings He sends. Thus, knowing and identifying forms of God's guidance is predicated on knowing oneself, and being able to identify a feeling of lust versus a feeling of love (a feeling sent by God); or identifying a sign in a potential husband's behaviour that guides a woman either closer to him or further away from him.

I propose a model of the life course that addresses the complexity of these movements, as well as the extension of spiritual time to include the life of the other world. Figure 5 shows the forward, backward, and upward movements in women's intimate relationships over the life course. Figure 6 represents the movements of the life course through the infinite extension of time as destiny. Figure 7 shows the inward, outward, and upward movements as women create a unity with God.

Figure 5: Forward, backward, and upward movement

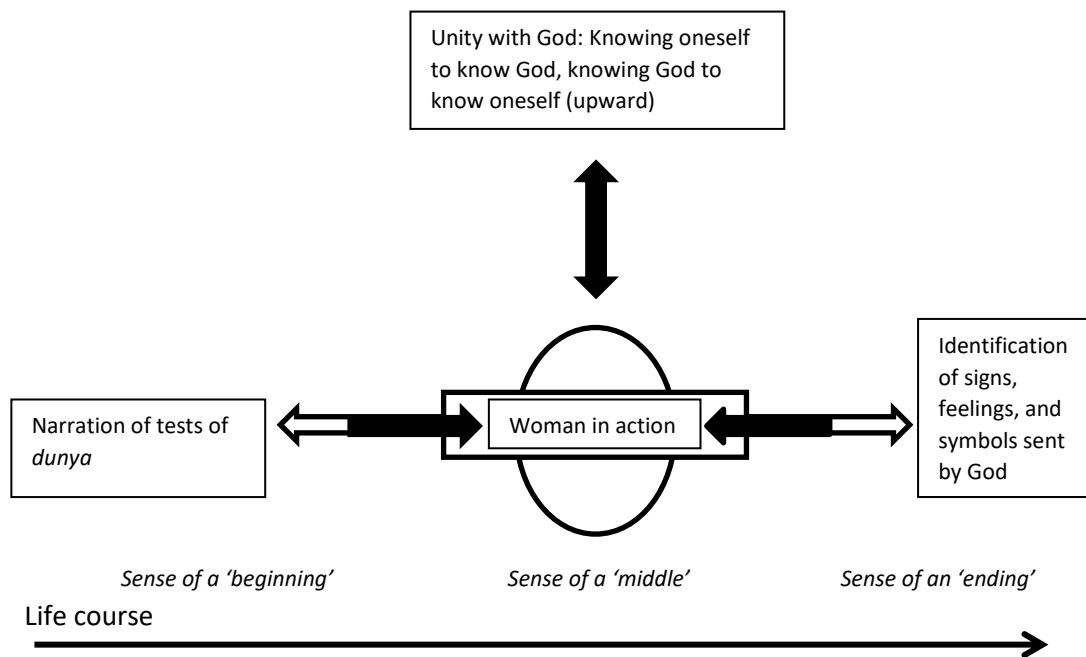


Figure 6: Movements of the life course as an analytical tool to isolate individual threads that make up a multiplicity of simultaneities

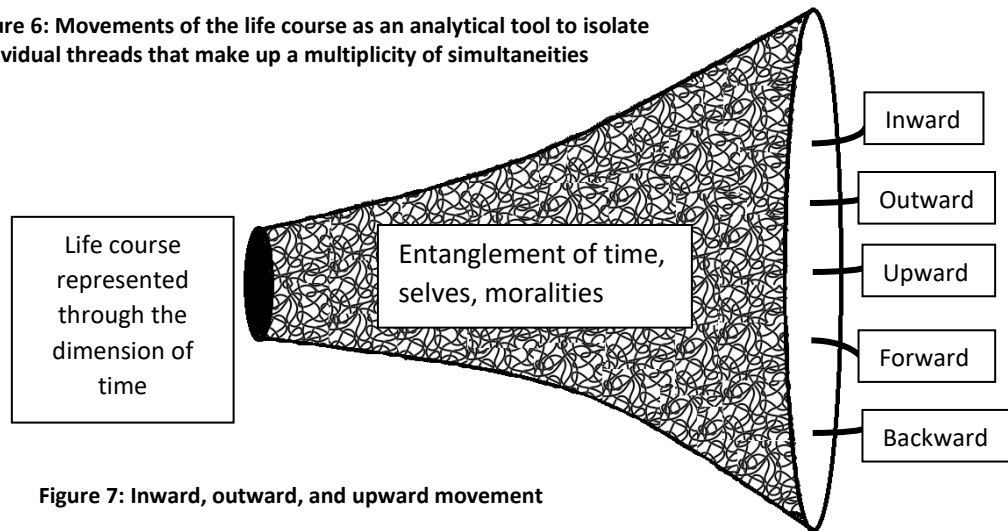
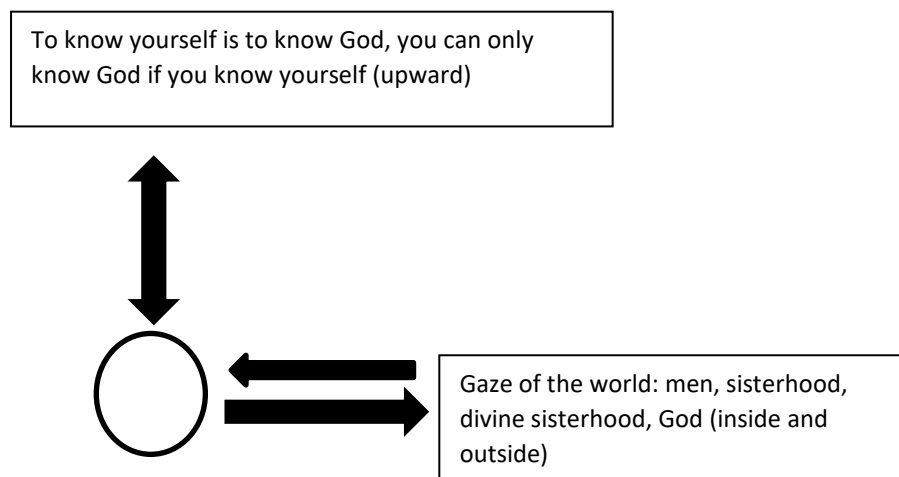


Figure 7: Inward, outward, and upward movement



8.3 Destiny

The life of the other world is infinite, and one's destiny, as in Paradise or Hell, depends on whether the scale on Judgement Day weighs more towards one's 'good' or 'bad' actions. I show that for Somali women difficulties encountered over the life course are perceived as 'tests' from God, where He watches women to see if they 'act well.' Rather than framing tests as failures they become reconfigured as moments of crisis or uncertainty. It is in these moments that women's relationship with the divine becomes most illuminated. I argue that destiny is a middle ground, where God creates women's capacity to act and it is up to them to exert their will to act on their destiny. Women consciously reflect on how best to act, or not, thus having an effect on the direction one's scale may tip on Judgement Day.

In this thesis I contextualise destiny within theological and anthropological contexts. The meaning, understanding, and practice of destiny varies throughout different schools of Islamic thought. There is also ethnographic variation in how men and women understand and act on their destiny, particularly in Elliot's (2016) description of young Moroccan women's beauty practices as a means to being prepared for one's destiny, and Carey's (2012) analysis of uncertainty in cell phone courtship. Thus, I take destiny to be an ethnographic concept, where the words and actions of my informants define its meaning and illuminate variation in how to act on and towards what one believes to be their destiny. I do not pluralise the concept of destiny, instead I recognise the plurality of experience, interpretation, and understanding this concept holds.

8.4 Argument for a new morality

Finally this thesis argues that young, urban women are putting forth an argument for a new morality. Studying moral change, contestation, and deliberation is not new for anthropologists and philosophers, and neither is analysis of what it means to live an ethical life (Appiah 2010; Aristotle 1996, 2009; Keane 2014, 2017; Laidlaw 2002, 2005, 2013a, 2013b, 2014, 2016; Mattingly 2010, 2013, 2014b; Marsden 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2009; Neveu Kringelbach 2013a, 2016a, 2016b; Robbins 2001, 2004, 2007a, 2007b, 2009, 2015a, 2016; Schielke 2006, 2009a, 2009b, 2010). Thus, not only does this thesis contribute to this growing literature, it also provides a new lens for analysing moral change over the life course. It explores the thought processes through which Somali women make moral judgements, and contributes to discussion about the interaction between Islamic text and lived experience. I show how over the life course women negotiate an entanglement of time, selves, and moralities. The values that inform moral action may shift and evolve over the life course, moral resolve may deepen and lessen at certain phases. The influences in women's lives may at times make daily actions feel complicated and cluttered, while at other times life may feel more clear, simple, and straightforward.

Such influences can create binding norms, norms which, at times, women cannot act outside of. It is within these binding cultural norms that Laidlaw (2013a, 2013b) and Robbins (2009) convincingly argue that individuals can still have a form of freedom; a freedom predicated on conscious reflection. I have argued for a similar form of freedom for a group of women who might be seen globally as lacking many freedoms; women

consciously reflect and decide on how to act, or not act, all of which is bound by cultural norms. However, I have shown how these binding norms are not necessarily fixed; they are mobile and permeable, especially as women's everyday influences grow more and more to include a continual exchange of global ideologies. Thus, as women negotiate new ways of being modern according to values like love, romance, piety, spirituality, and materialism (and the values they subsume in the hierarchy, like modesty, intimacy, and knowledge) they also push against, and reshape 'correct' enactments of values.

Although binding norms may appear static, understanding the values that inform women's choices in their everyday life reveals the potential for cultural and moral change. For example, mothers may choose to cut their daughters for a myriad of reasons: potential for a better marriage partner, cleanliness, gendering of the body, part of the process of becoming a woman, religious duty, sexual control. The reasons mothers may choose Sunna instead of Pharaonic are part of a process of deliberation and conscious reflection. Mothers may draw on their own FGC experiences, or the virtues and values associated with certain health, human rights, and religious discourses. However, such variation in cutting preference, personal experience, and justification suggests that there is sometimes value conflict when women deliberate the practice. For example, the debate my friend Magol and her elder sister engaged in on FGC shows that their own life experiences and situations influence their cutting preferences. Magol is beautiful, educated, and engaged to marry a Somali man living and working in Qatar. In contrast her sister suffers with epilepsy and is thus not considered to be beautiful, nor was she able to attend school, and she openly acknowledges that she will not marry. I observed one heated debate, shortly before Magol's wedding, over the type of cutting Magol should give her potential future daughter. Magol argued that she would make sure her daughter was cut according to Sunna because she felt that it was Islamically justified and supported, Pharaonic was not needed or necessary. She also argued that on a woman's wedding night she would not face any health problems, nor would she suffer during child birth. Magol's sister disagreed and argued that Sunna is not pure, only Pharaonic can ensure a woman's purity and cleanliness.

This variation in preference, experience, and justification suggests that there is negotiation and sometimes conflict of the values of piety, health, economics, purity, cleanliness, and womanhood. When values are in potential conflict, the debates and discussions that women engage in reveal their conscious deliberation about how to act (or not). This

deliberation illuminates contemporary value hierarchies and young women's arguments for a new morality.

Additionally, the shift in preference from Pharaonic to Sunna suggests that the process of deliberation and conscious reflection can, and does lead to an argument for a new morality. I argue that although women are bound by cultural norms as they engage in conscious deliberation, this does not mean that those norms are static. Instead, when values are in conflict (for example health and piety) women's debate and discussion leads to cultural change and a new morality. I attended a local NGO workshop on FGC where female activists, young women, health practitioners, government officials, and religious elders debated FGC. Each group was informed by different values and the discussion turned heated, and almost resulted in a fist fight between female activists and the religious elders. Female activists argued against all forms of cutting citing women's health and their own traumatic experiences, explaining that there is no social need for the practice to continue. In contrast religious elders argued that Sunna circumcision is obligatory under Islam, and that Pharaonic circumcision is now considered 'wrong' (they once deemed it obligatory). A heated argument ensued and came to a peak when a young woman stood up to say that if the religious elders say Sunna is obligatory then it must be followed. This revealed that for many Somalis, piety is the paramount value informing FGC, but that correct notions of piety have changed such that Pharaonic is no longer 'good' and that women must now have Sunna. This indicates that value hierarchies can change as values come into conflict with each other and, as women consciously deliberate practices like FGC, new moral orders come to the fore.

Women can learn how to correctly enact values through sisterhoods like those of *sitaat* and *Qoys Kaab*. Chapter 5 shows that *sitaat* and *Qoys Kaab*, two seemingly contrasting sisterhoods in their 'correct' notions of Islam, are actually 'doing' the same thing; suggesting that although it may appear that young, urban women practice a more 'conservative' form of Islam, they still strive to live a virtuous life that is not that unfamiliar to older women; young women understand piety differently. Here I show that *Qoys Kaab* classes indicate young women's desires for a new morality that reflects their values in everyday interaction, and through institutions like marriage.

Qoys Kaab is a school created by women, led by women, and all the students were women. We met every week to learn how to better ourselves, how to meet and please a husband, and how to better serve Allah. At the same time we created a community of women. We were a sisterhood that facilitated positive relationships with each other and the community as a whole.

I show how *Qoys Kaab* was created to explicitly teach women the skills needed to find success in marriage and family. However, *Qoys Kaab* is not simply about straight forward learning, rather the classes illuminate a greater trend amongst young women, a trend towards creating a new morality that reflects the diverse influences in their daily lives. Women are influenced by the internet, TV programmes, friends, university, family abroad, and, as such, women negotiate, deliberate, and discuss the sometimes contesting values these influences bring. Thus, young urban women are forging a form of authenticated piety predicated on the values of what it means to be modern. Women are forging new understandings and practices of the values that guide their lives; and rather than viewing them in contradiction, women actively work to balance them in their daily lives. Sometimes women fail, and sometimes it is clear-cut, while other times this new enactment of values requires a societal change. In other words, women are creating an argument for a new morality that demands systematic recognition of values, and structural change.

Not every young woman, nor man, sees themselves as part of this argument for a new morality. For some, the *Qoys Kaab* women and the understanding and practice of Islam they work towards is too 'extreme,' misinformed, or 'backwards.' For example, one friend, Bilan, has spent time abroad and has resettled in Somaliland. When I described *Qoys Kaab* lessons to her she was often outraged at the 'misinformation' we were learning about the Quran. Bilan was particularly upset about the lesson titled 'Things women do that men hate' by Cabdinasser, where he explained that a husband can beat his wife after the third time he has told her something and she doesn't comply. Bilan agreed with his teaching, but was upset we were encouraged not to speak to our mothers, sisters, or friends about other 'unjustified' instances of domestic violence. Cabdinasser described the potential betrayal of the marital union and a woman's husband that occurs if a woman turns to her female support networks for guidance. Instead he, along with Nada (who echoed his lesson when I followed up with her after class), encouraged us to turn to prayer. They said

that it was through God that all of our problems would be solved, and that we must go deeper into our faith to find comfort. When I told this to Bilan she threw her hands in the air and was exasperated. She had left an abusive husband and found comfort in her mother and sisters. She argued that women must be allowed to get help from the female community²⁵¹.

In other words, for some Somalilanders, like Bilan, the *Qoys Kaab* women misunderstand the values that inform 'correct' Islamic practice. The presence of multiple discourses of 'correct' practice are informed by values (religious, social, and nationalistic) that are seemingly constant throughout society and across generations. Rather it is the hierarchy of these values (and the values that inform them) and the subsequent enactment of them that are in potential conflict.

8.5 Value ethics

Like Robbins (2004, 2007a) I premise my use of engaging with value ethics according to the theoretical affordance of exploring notions of change. It becomes possible to analyse moral change by understanding how values operate in a society, according to a model of freedom (predicated on conscious reflection, deliberation, and negotiation) that does not disregard the binding force of cultural norms and the routines they produce (Robbins 2007a, 296). Robbins' own work analyses cultural and moral change over a long time scale specifically through a model of modernization. It is through this model that a society takes "on something new without prejudging what happens to what was there before" (2004, 11). The "something new" is a new system of values which informs a new moral way of being, or what I call an argument for a new morality.

Not only does this thesis explore new systems of values and arguments for a new morality that young Somali women are creating and demanding, but it also considers how such values inform what it means to be modern. By utilising both micro²⁵², and macro²⁵³ temporal frames of analysing change I am able to illuminate micro changes in morality over

²⁵¹ Bilan's outrage at the formal textual interpretation of the Quran Cabdinasser and Nada taught was echoed by several others who have spent time abroad. Many women who have lived in the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia, explained to me that local Somali sheikhs "are not to be trusted" and that "Saudi sheikhs know the religion." This speaks to larger themes of 'correct' and 'authentic' Islam.

²⁵² Particularly in Chapters 4-7.

²⁵³ See Chapter 1 for more on time scales and moral change; see Chapter 8 for concluding comments on moral development and a macro time frame.

the life course, as well as macro changes in morality over a historical period. By considering the continuity and changes across these time scales I am able to analyse processes of moral development as part of ethical self-cultivation.

Ethical self-cultivation is premised on understanding and practicing values learned over the life course. As values are learned, one may understand and practice them differently as one passes through different stages of life. Additionally, as a person develops, their paramount values may change as well. For example, a *Qoys Kaab* student may place a high value on love and romance as she prepares to marry. Yet, once she marries she may equally value modesty as she negotiates her private desire for love and romance with her husband and her public display of modesty when she is around other men. When a paramount value is replaced or comes to exist alongside an old one, then the kind of change that occurs is covered in a model of modernization, or what Robbins prefers to call a model of adoption (Robbins 2004, 12). Thus, as one progresses through the life course, one's understanding and practice of values changes according to the transformations one undergoes. Focusing on young women as they prepare for marriage illuminates their transformation in the life course and in turn a potential shift in their paramount values. Additionally, by framing life course transformation according to a model of adoption, what it means to be modern is also reframed. What it means to be modern for young women is not a rejection of past values (as 'tradition'); instead it is a change in value hierarchy according to the understanding and practice of 'correct' Islam.

8.6 Fowsia revisited

One woman who has witnessed and lived through many moral changes is Fowsia. Fowsia's life spans many decades and she has passed through nearly all of life's phases. She shared her experiences of FGC and childbirth, she has been an active member in numerous *sitaat* sisterhoods in Djibouti and Somaliland, she used her divination skills to communicate with spirits, and she described with flourish her marital disappointments and familial challenges.

Fowsia's reflections on life reveals many moments of trauma, like her FGC and child birth experiences, as well as many disappointments like her failed marriages and her lack of sexual satisfaction. However, she has experienced moments of divine transcendence like when she communicates to her spirits, chews *qaat*, and even when she fought the evil

spirits sent to harm Basr. She has also experienced joy, especially through the sisterhoods she has been a part of.

Some of these moments could be described as moral triumph and others as moral failures, much like Klienman's (2006) analysis of his informant's ordinary life events. However, for Fowsia, moral triumph and failure are 'tallied' over the life course and based on her actions towards the 'best good' when tested by God. And although it may seem that at times Fowsia is self-indulgent, perhaps in her *qaat* consumption, she balances this through her generosity given to members of her sisterhood, like entering the spirit battle to protect Basr. Thus the next phase of the life course for Fowsia is perhaps death and the final weighing of her deeds, which will determine if she has done more 'good' than 'bad' to send her towards her destiny and hopefully achieve everything she didn't quite get in the life of this world.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A Sitaat song expressing women's uncertain future after they are sent away from their matrimonial home after divorce

Naago Allahoodow,
Allah Roonhoodow,
Raaxeeyahoodo
Aqalkay dhisteenee
Dhigaha laga dhaqaajoo
Dhaar looga jiidee
Ubadkay dhaleenee
Dharabta u dhigeen baa
Galab laga dhaqaajoo
Daar looga jeedee
Adhigay dhaqeenee
Maqasha u dhigeen baa
Galab laga dhaqaajoo
Dhaar loogaa jiidee

Translation:

O, Allah of women,
Who is good to women,
And eases their difficulties.
The hut they [women] fashioned,
With splendid dyed frames,
Were they forcibly ejected from,
Never to set eyes on again.
The children they brough froth,
Cared for and nurtured,
Were forcibly taken from them,
Never to set eyes on again.
The sheep and goats they reared,

Cared for as lambs and kids
Were forcibly taken away,
Never to set eyes on again.
(Warsame 2002, 24-25)

*Appendix B A buraanbur (women's poetry) written by Faduma Alim's mother
on women's treatment despite their educational success*

Sisters, you sold your jewellery
Depriving yourselves
Enriching the struggle
Sisters, you stayed as one
United, even when your brothers [men]
Divided and deceived our nation
Sisters, we were forgotten
We did not taste the fruits of success
Even the lowest positions
Were not offered
And our degrees were cast aside as dirt
Sisters; was this what we struggled for?
(Duale 1981: 30 as cited by Ingiriis 2015, 384)

*Appendix C Poem composed by a mother "regretting" the birth of her
daughter*

Why were you born?
Why did you arrive at dusk?
In your place a boy
Would have been welcome
Sweet dates would have
Been my reward.
The clan would be rejoicing

A lamb would have
Been slaughtered
For the occasion,
And I would have
Been glorified

(Hassan et al, 1995:176 as cited by Warsame 2002: 33)

Appendix D Poem composed by a mother "sympathising" with her new born daughter's "unjustified" status

Hooyo way inoo gefeene
Ardaa aan gabadhi joogin
Maandhay geel laguma maalo
Oo gamaan lagu fuuli maayo

Translation:

O, my daughter, men have
Wronged us
For in a dwelling where women
Are not present
No camels are milked
Nor saddled horses mounted

(Hassan et al, 1995:176 as cited by Warsame 2002: 33)

Appendix E A selection of love poetry

Dhiif iyo Jacayl ('Love and Disaster')

"Naa, waan bukaa, adna waad bugtaa,
Labadii bugtaa ways baanataa.
Anna waan bukaa, adna waad bugtaa,
Labadii bugtaa ways baanataa.
Aan is baanannee buul inoo kiree!

He: O woman, I am sick and you are sick,
The two who are sick should look after each other.
She: I also am sick and you are sick,
The two who are sick should look after each other.
Let us find a little hut for ourselves!

Taken from the narrative Dhiif iyo Jacayl ('Love and Disaster') in Mohamed 1967, 14.
Another version of this narrative, but with identical poetic passages, was broadcast about a year ago by Muuse X.I. Galaal on Radio Mogadiscio in one of the programmes devoted to Somali poetry and prose."

(Andrzejewski 2011b)

"A man in the nomadic interior would never admit in public to this kind of sentimentality:
Haddii aan 'Qari!' lahaa qaraamkii i galay,
Ilmada qubanaysa yaa qarin?
If I say to myself 'Conceal your love!'
Who will conceal my tears?
But in the towns the audience reacted with loud sighs and fixed ecstatic gaze; some people
were known actually to have fainted on hearing such poems as
Sidii damal dhacay oo dab lagu shiday,
Jidhkaygii dambas weeye, daraaddaa!
Like a tall tree which, fallen, was set alight,
I am ashes."
(Andrzejewski 2011a)

By Ilmi Boodari

"At times I made light of it and I was free
Then suddenly I was shown her in a vision – she was the colour of a lighted lantern
She must have become imprinted on my heart, for how else could I be so intoxicated by her?
Inside my breast she tick-tocks to me like a watch
At night when I fall asleep she comes to sport with me
But at early dawn she leaves me and turns into a rising pillar of dust.
(original text in Rashiid Maxamed Shabeele 1975, 67)"

(Andrzejewski 2011b)

Qaraami ('The Passion') by Ilmi Boodari

The Passion is "dedicated to the memory of the girl he loved but could not marry because he was too poor to pay the bride wealth demanded by her elders. Referring to the opportunity he missed in not meeting the object of his passion because he was asleep when she once paid him a secret visit, Boodari sang regretfully:

Harka galay hurdadu waa xuntehe hohe maxay seexshay

Bal inaan habaar qabo maxaa Hodon i waydaarshay

Oh, to sleep in broad daylight is the [root] of evil.

Why have I slept?

If I am not accursed, why have I missed [the opportunity of meeting] my beloved Hodon?"

(Samatar 1980, 451)

Appendix F Beerta Qoyska, translated by Cabdixakiim Cabdilahi Cumar

Table 1 Beerta Qoyska

Chapter 1: Marriage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The meaning of marriage• The objectives of marriage• Types of marriage• Marriage and Islam
Chapter 2: Family Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partner selection• Conduct• Physical and spiritual beauty• Marriage and dating problems• Old/modern marriage• Legality• Engagement and "dowry"• The wedding
Chapter 3: Pillars of the Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Religion• Love and the different types of love• Finance and rights• Leadership• Appropriate dress• "Renewal" of marriage

Selected translation of a passage from Chapter 1: Marriage

"There are goals behind the marriage which are very important for the person to take care of, before marriage and after.

The main objectives of the marriage are:

1. Tranquillity

What is tranquillity? We shall observe two sides of its meaning:

As it is defined by scholars after they had read the Qur'an and the Prophet's Hadiith (narrations). Let's talk about the two points that have been mentioned above, with a brief explanation on each.

Scholars define tranquillity that it encompasses one of the four following points-

Stability which means to keep one's heart stable and unshaken in whichever state he is in, both in affliction or health, in adversity or prosperity, in gaining some thing or losing it. It is necessary, the stability to the remembrance of Allah, as He says in the Holy Qur'an: "Those who are believers, their hearts get stability with the remembrance of Allah O' pay attention to! By the remembrance of Allah hearts get stability."

Stability is a comfort that is felt in the heart. The person feels comfort, pleasure exhilaration in the heart.

Stability is the accordance of the person with the world and becoming contented with his life in the world and not contradicted.

Stability is the joining of the person himself to paradise, persisting worship and spending most of the time in the mosque.

2. The second definition is of the people in the world who define it in different ways-

Some of them know it [stability], getting more wealth for indulgence and doing whatever one wishes.

Some of them know it [stability], getting of high status and elevated exalted position, so they can become well known and famous, in that way he gets stability.

Others say that stability could is gotten by becoming well-educated and getting more knowledge.

Stability is calmness which is felt in the heart of the person both in the life and after life. When the person is unmarried, he is worried. He cannot get rid of that worrying by getting more wealth, status, fame or knowledge but the only way that he could get spiritual and physical comfort is life as a couple based on legitimate independent marriage. When the heart feels stability, it transmits to the rest of the body, then the body performs what is being transmitted it by the heart. The first goal of the marriage is getting of stability. Without it the person could not perform worship as well as world tasks. Therefore, Allah permitted the marriage for the couple of different sexes [between male and female], created from the same to get stability and spiritual comfort. Stability does not depend on only time but it constitutes the person's life, in every situation he is in, he needs to get it. Let us take a part of the poem composed by the great. Composer Mohamed Ibrahim (Hadrawi) which shows how stability is relative to the couples' life:

When it is night time you only turn by yourself over

Loneliness renders instability

You and your blanket together move sideways

You make the cushion

A shelter and armour,

If you don't put your hands on an exquisite lady whenever you want
You feel solitude"

Appendix G On polygamy

"A young woman who married a man who had another wife said:

I was tired of taking care of four small siblings plus my father and my two older brothers. My father is unemployed so my mother became pre-occupied with bringing us income. There was nobody to assist me with all the chores. I just wanted to escape from it all. So when this man approached me, I saw it as a way out and accepted to be his wife even though he told me that he had another wife"

Warsame 2002, 57

Appendix H The legend of Araweelo

Araweelo was a widow whose husband died and failed to leave her any inheritance. Araweelo was forced to fend for her and her children. Over time she discovered that she could provide for herself and her children, independent of any man's support. Men who learned about Araweelo's situation came to "resent" her independence and later fought her over fear "that their women would take her example of personal initiative and independence".

The men verbally and physically abused Araweelo only to find that her "rebellion" increased. The men of her community banished her and, in turn, she organised women of similar "misfortune" in the woods on the periphery of her community. Men then took up arms to "subdue" her and her "female comrades". Araweelo and the women defeated the men in a series of battles and even castrated their male prisoners.

Her victory in battle "alarmed" male adversaries and stories of prisoner castration sent fear and panic amongst all men. Eventually one old man, Oday Biiqay, killed Araweelo "using the infirmness of his age and debility of his body" to trap her.

This legend is told to children "to socialise them into their expected roles;" for females to be weary of independence and not to revolt against men, and for men to remain vigilant against "female autonomy, power, and peril". It teaches children that women who gain power will use it against men. (Bulhan 322, 2013)